

THE **ROOKIE** ISSUE |

WHAT YOU NEED TO
KNOW ABOUT HOCKEY'S
YOUNG GIANTS

The Hockey News

MEET THE NEXT JONATHAN TOEWS

YES, **DYLAN LARKIN**
IS THAT GOOD

MAX DOMI
& THE YOUTH
UPRISING
IN ARIZONA

IS
3-ON-3
REALLY
WORKING?

"HEY,
DON'T FORGET
ABOUT ME!"



JOHN SCOTT
JUST HOW NASTY IS
NHL'S BRAWL-STAR?

PLUS: ARTEMI PANARIN, JACK EICHEL, ROBBY FABBRI, OSCAR LINDBERG

A HISTORY OF INNOVATION



Dr. John Ellis introduces the first petroleum-based engine lubricating oil

1866



Valvoline develops X-18, a single grade oil which could be used in place of 18 different specified automotive lubricants

1939



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1965



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2000

1895

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1954

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Valvoline invented the engine oil category almost 150 years ago – and we haven't stopped pushing new innovations since.

OVER 140 YEARS UNDER THE HOOD

The Hockey News

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FEATURES

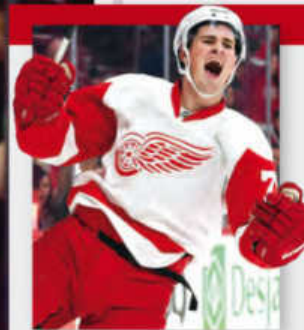
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ON THE COVER Dylan Larkin by Bill Wippert/NHLI via Getty Images, Connor McDavid by Andy Devlin/NHLI via Getty Images

TEEN PIPE DREAM

Goalies don't often win the Calder, but when they do, they're of legal drinking age...with one epic exception



POP QUIZ, AND NO PEEKING at your tablet, phone, laptop, desktop, watch or the first sentence of the next paragraph. Who of the following is eligible for the Calder this season: (a) Leon Draisaitl, (b) John Gibson, (c) Nikita Nesterov or (d) Teuvo Teravainen?

If you said (b), pat yourself on the back and send an application to work in The Hockey News' research department. The 22-year-old Ducks goalie, who had appeared in 26 regular season and four playoff games entering 2015-16, still meets the criteria for NHL rookie of the year honors even though it feels like he's post-newbie.

It's a quirk of the rules under which a player can't have played more than 25 games in any one season, or six or more in each of two seasons, if he still has designs on the Calder. Oh, and thanks to Sergei Makarov, he can't be older than 25 by Sept. 15 (even though the era of star Euros parachuting into the NHL late in their careers is long gone). And the quirk often applies to goalies, who can be on NHL rosters for long stretches but not accrue the requisite games if they're in backup roles. Notable multiple-season freshman netminders include two guys – Jake Allen and Jamie Storr – who earned all-rookie team honors...twice.

It partially explains why goalies who win the Calder are typically older than skaters. On average, a rookie of the year stopper is 23, compared to about 21 for forwards and 20 for defensemen. They tend to take longer to mature and get more cups of coffee before graduating to lattes and cappuccinos.

There is one highly notable exception. In 1983-84, Tom Barrasso leapt directly from his high school prom to Buffalo and had his name engraved not just on the Calder, but also the Vezina. He was second in goals-against average and third in save percentage and posted significantly better stats than the incumbent, Bob Sauve, who had been a solid No. 1. And, astoundingly, Barrasso did it all before he turned 20.

Combined with his two Stanley Cup rings and the crucial role he played in earning them, his three all-star team berths and his record for consecutive playoff games won (14), Barrasso secured his place in hockey history. Sort of. Despite the credentials, he remains a Hall of Fame outsider, due in part, many believe, to a reputation for being less affable than Mr. Rogers. Pity.

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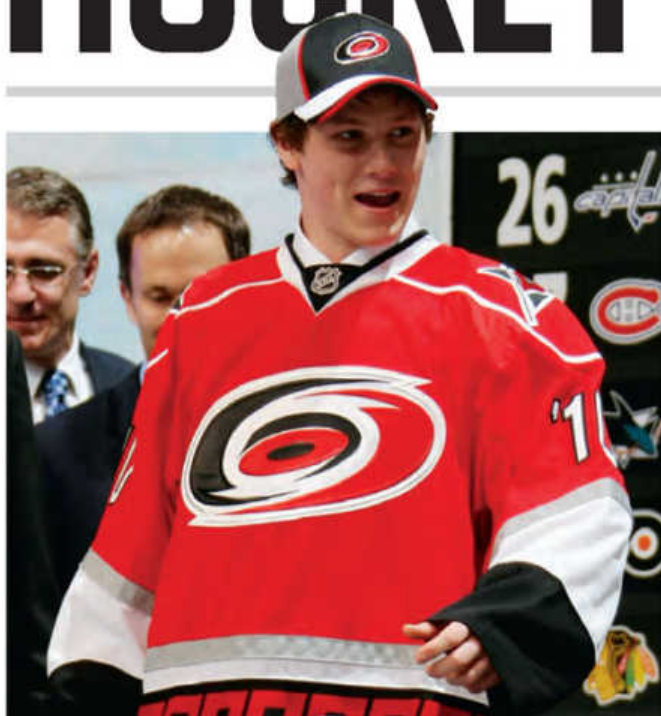
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INSIDE HOCKEY



PATRICK MARLEAU
1997-98



CRASH COURSE IN NHL LIFE 101

It's hard enough adjusting to playing in the big-time, but rookies have to navigate the financial waters as well

WHAT STARTED AS A \$5 foot-long on Jeff Skinner's dinner plate is now a filet mignon. Every juicy bite perfectly symbolizes the transition from junior hockey to life as a professional in the NHL, and it literally happened to Skinner. He remembers scrounging his

cash during his OHL days with the Kitchener Rangers to hit up Subway for whatever sandwich was on special. The next thing he knew, Carolina drafted him seventh overall in 2010 and he was an 18-year-old wunderkind, sniping 31 goals en route to the Calder Trophy. He signed an entry-level contract in Sep-

HITTING THE JACKPOT

When he was drafted by the Hurricanes, Skinner could barely afford a foot-long at Subway.

tember of that season paying him a \$900,000 salary and a \$500,000 performance bonus. His bank account ballooned. Submarine sandwiches were no longer a necessity.

One look at Skinner's baby face betrays his age, sure. But this puts into perspective just how young he was as a suddenly wealthy NHL rookie: he says a car wasn't the first thing he ran out to buy, because he had only just learned to drive before he moved to Raleigh. "You're being careful, watching what you eat and how much you're spending, and then you turn pro, you're living on your own," he said. "I can remember going to the mall, and I didn't really shop that much, and guys were going into nice stores and buying nice clothes, and I didn't really understand why they were doing that (laughs). But it's part of growing up, learning responsibilities and having a full-time job."

Possessing the rare caliber of talent that whisks you directly to the NHL is a double-edged sword. On the bright side, hockey is more of a young man's game than ever, and junior-level players have far more access to training and nutritional advice growing up, allowing them to ready their bodies for the world's top league. It's a night-and-day

difference from what San Jose Sharks left winger Patrick Marleau experienced in 1997 as an 18-year-old. "When me and 'Jumbo' (Joe Thornton) came in, you had to be big, you had to be strong, you had to fight through a lot of clutching and grabbing, hooking and holding," Marleau said. "And then they opened up the game, and it

allows skill to come out and allows the younger players that are coming in that much more free room."

Fast-tracking as a teen carries the perk of immediate, life-altering financial security if a player sticks with a team and signs an entry-level deal. But there's a downside. It means no AHL or college to ease the transition into adulthood. Players who may have never lived a day away from home or billet families are suddenly on their own. "It's so disorienting for an 18-year-old player," said Octagon player agent Allan Walsh. "I have no bank account. I have no debit card. I have no credit card." And then, when you get everything, "When do I use my credit card? When do I use my debit card? Why?"

Skinner, however, wasn't without a paddle. He'd played his junior hockey close to home and his "billet" was actually his brother, Ben. "My mom and dad have been really good at keeping me grounded and making sure I'm smart with the stuff I have and, for lack of a better word, not being stupid," he said.

Not every player has the same early support. Take Los Angeles Kings right winger Marian Gaborik, who broke into the NHL with the Minnesota Wild at 18 in 2000. He and Skinner both said the one thing they splurged on with their first contract was a fancy new laptop, but whereas Skinner picked up his MacBook without a problem, Gaborik, a fresh arrival from Slovakia, had a hard time securing his coveted Sony Vaio. He handed a Best Buy employee all he could: a cheque for \$2,500. Gaborik had no social security number and no proof he was who he said he was, and he was sent home without

PLEASE TAKE MY MONEY

Gaborik had trouble making big purchases as a rookie, because he had no credit in the U.S.

the laptop. He had to gather more documents and return the next day. "You don't have a line of credit, you don't have anything established in the U.S., no credit, nothing," Gaborik said. "Big chunk of money coming in, a guy who is young, they're looking at you handing them an international driver's license. So it was a red flag for them."

It's an entirely different experience being a rookie crossing the Atlantic without your family, as Gaborik did. His parents drilled sound advice into his brain before he left, at least. "I wasn't going around spending money and just throwing it around like a piece of paper," he said. "I really tried to be smart about that and appreciate the money."

Some youngsters aren't so lucky, most famously Columbus Blue Jackets defenseman Jack Johnson, who in his early 20s signed control of his finances over to his mother before signing his seven-year, \$30.5-million extension with Los Angeles. After his parents had spent lavishly, Johnson filed for bankruptcy in 2014.

So how do green NHLers avoid financial pitfalls if they aren't raised like Skinner and Gaborik were? Per the collective bargaining agreement, the NHL and NHL Players' Association jointly sponsor a rookie orientation program every off-season. Each franchise "can select up to three entry-level players who are expected to be playing in the NHL for a significant period of time in the upcoming season to attend each rookie orientation program." The ROP includes real-life testimonial sessions in which retired players discuss their experiences, an NHLPA spokesperson told THN.



Once the season starts, the PA visits each team as part of its annual league-wide tour and offers further financial advice. "In each meeting, NHLPA officials will typically touch on the importance of the players to manage their personal finances, be careful of who they surround themselves with and to watch their investments closely," the spokesperson said.

Teams occasionally create new "billet" environments, in which rookies live with families. Think Sidney Crosby shackling up with Mario Lemieux in Pittsburgh. For the most part, though, teams let players sort things out via their peers. Skinner lived with goaltender Justin Peters, who served as a role model for how to spend, how to cook and how to be a model adult NHLer. Skinner can't say enough good things about him. Gaborik gravitated toward fel-

low Slovak Lubomir Sekeras.

The sense from talking to players is they prefer learning from one another to learning from team management. They also have agents to hold their hands. "You have to put the structure together fast and efficiently," Walsh said, "and be prepared to explain things many different times over and over again until it starts to all sink in for the players to get that a-ha moment, 'Now I understand everything, and it all makes sense to me off the ice.'"

Most agencies have financial services divisions to assist players, opening their bank accounts, securing their credit and debit cards and even reviewing leases before they sign them.

There's obviously no pity party for teenage millionaires, but with the laser-like focus it takes to become elite, the truth is they often don't receive the same real-life preparation as regular kids. The more assistance they get and the earlier they get it, the better off they are and the more independent they become in the long run.

— MATT LARKIN

BREAKING THE BANK

Which sport's reigning No. 1 overall selection has the fattest wallet?

NHL



CONNOR McDAVID
CENTER



AGE: 18
AVERAGE SALARY: \$3,775,000
SIGNING BONUS: \$92,500
GUARANTEED MONEY: \$11,325,000 (3 YRS)

NFL



JAMEIS WINSTON
QUARTERBACK



AGE: 21
AVERAGE SALARY: \$6,337,819
SIGNING BONUS: \$10,853,240
GUARANTEED MONEY: \$25,351,277 (4 YRS)

NBA



KARL-ANTHONY TOWNS
CENTER



AGE: 19
AVERAGE SALARY: \$5,831,880
SIGNING BONUS: NONE
GUARANTEED MONEY: \$11,663,760 (2 YRS)

MLB



DANSBY SWANSON
SHORTSTOP



AGE: 21
AVERAGE SALARY: N/A
SIGNING BONUS: \$6,500,000
GUARANTEED MONEY: N/A

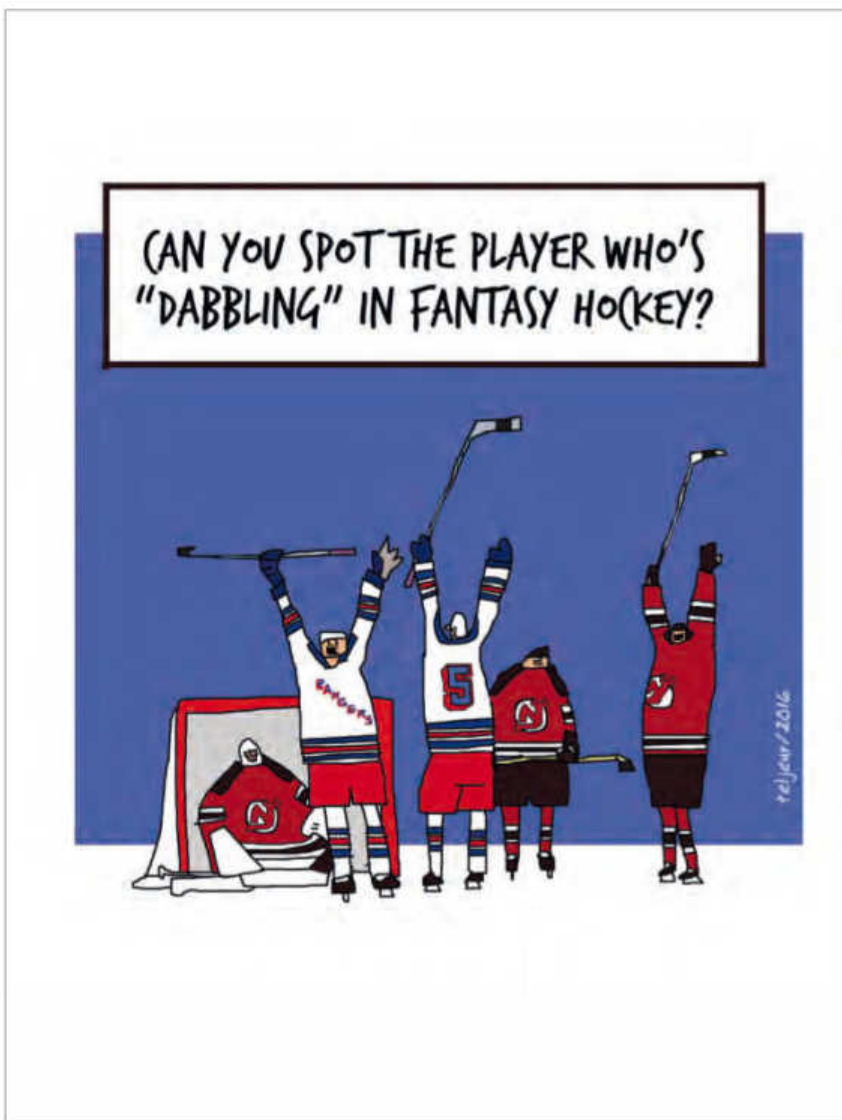
[925k	[1.08M	[1.49M
PATRICK MARLEAU'S YEAR 1 SALARY (‘97-98)	MARIAN GABORIK'S YEAR 1 SALARY (‘00-01)	JEFF SKINNER'S YEAR 1 SALARY (‘10-11)*

*including signing and performance bonuses

*Ages are as of draft day

THE INSTIGATOR

By Charlie Teljeur



In The CARDS

NOT SINCE SIDNEY CROSBY made his debut in 2005 has a rookie received as much attention – from card collectors and speculators alike – as Connor McDavid has this season. Sales have surged due to the inclusion of McDavid's rookie card in sets. So great is the demand that Upper Deck released the "Connor McDavid Collection," a boxed set consisting of 25 trading cards and one oversized commemorative card. The set examines McDavid's career, retracing his years in junior, on the international stage and his early NHL career.

BY SAL BARRY OF PUCKJUNK.COM

BOOK REVIEW



COVER WORTHY

From catcher cages to masterpieces, history and art collide in mask book

A GOALIE MASK IS AS functional as it is visually appealing. So too is this book. Do not mistake *Saving Face: The Art and History of the Goalie Mask* as mere eye candy. It is so much more.

The large-format book is packed with full-color photographs of hockey's most famous masks, past and present. But it also serves as a history guide, chronicling the mask's evolution. Co-authors Jim Hynes and Gary Smith recount the earliest instances of mask usage during the pre-NHL era or internationally – even delving into the history of the baseball catcher's mask, which found its way onto the ice on more than one occasion.

Saving Face then gives a thorough account of how the mask grew and changed, from the fiberglass cover that Bill Burchmore made for Jacques Plante, to the helmet and "birdcage" made famous by Vladislav Tretiak, to the combo-style mask developed by Dave Dryden and Greg Harrison that is still popular today. Throughout the 176 pages in this newly released revised edition, every significant mask maker and artist is profiled, noting their contributions to the continued evolution of hockey's most iconic piece of equipment.

– SAL BARRY



GORDIE HOWE GETS BIG ASSIST

The end was near for Mr. Hockey. Then his son arranged a treatment that changed everything in just two days

UNLIKE OLDER BROTHERS Mark and Marty, Murray Howe never played professional hockey. He never even came close. He has, however, scored – or at least assisted on – a very big goal that hockey enthusiasts the world over continue to be most appreciative of.

Not only has Dr. Murray Howe played a significant role in the saving of his father Gordie's life, but he's also helped coordinate Mr. Hockey's amazing and ongoing rehabilitation from a debilitating stroke.

After playing Jr. B in Toronto with the likes of Wayne Gretzky and Paul Coffey during the mid-1970s, Murray was drafted in the 20th round in the 1977 Ontario major Jr. A midget draft by the Windsor Spitfires. He chose academics over athletics, however, and enrolled at the Univer-

sity of Michigan. He attempted to catch on with the Wolverines' hockey team as a freshman walk-on but was unceremoniously cut during his pre-med studies. Howe, a left winger who was only 5-foot-6 and 165 pounds at the time, never attempted to play competitively again. After graduating from medical school, he accepted a position as a radiologist in Toledo, Ohio, 25 years ago and has never left.

After Gordie suffered a massive stroke at 86 on Oct. 26, 2014, his health deteriorated quickly. A blood vessel in his brain had burst, killing cells in a region of the thalamus that control body movement. "Dad was completely bedridden and could barely talk," Murray said. "He couldn't move his right side and he had no strength at all. He received a lot of encourage-

KING OF COMEBACKS

Gordie has improved to the point where he can now go to games, here with sons Mark and Murray, and Mark's son, Nolan.

“
WE WERE
GETTING CLOSE
TO GETTING
READY TO HAVE
TO LET HIM GO

– Dr. Murray Howe

ment from the Red Wings and other teams and while that did perk him up a bit, after about two weeks he had really given up hope.”

Murray said his entire family was resigned to the supposed inevitability of Gordie's imminent death, especially when he was re-admitted to hospital in December of 2014 due to severe dehydration. “We thought we were getting close to getting ready to have to let him go,”

Murray said. “It was a rough time for us all.”

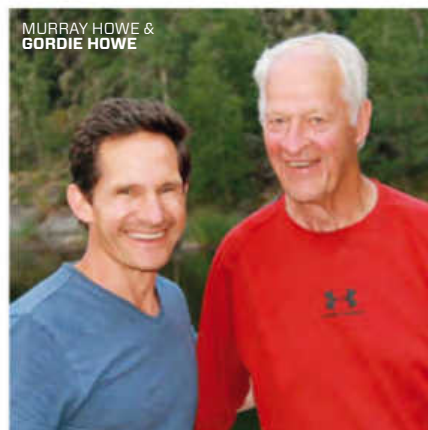
Funeral arrangements were being made and Murray even wrote his father's eulogy. Then, out of the blue, a stem cell company in California contacted Murray and he made the arrangements for his father to participate in a clinical trial in Mexico that saw Gordie regain movement on the affected side of his body after only two days. He had to have the stem cell treatment in Mexico because he didn't meet the California requirement of being at least six months post-stroke.

The fact Murray is able to consult with his father's team

of doctors, including Dr. Roger Kruse, Gordie's primary physician, and then relay information continues to be soothing for the immediate Howe family, which also includes sister Cathy. “As the baby of the family, I never really had a lot of input in a lot of family matters, but being in a privileged position as a doctor has given me the opportunity to play a more central role for both my parents,” Murray said. “I've sort of quarterbacked my father's care and my siblings know that I have nothing but the best intentions for our dad, especially when it comes to getting him the best medical care available.”

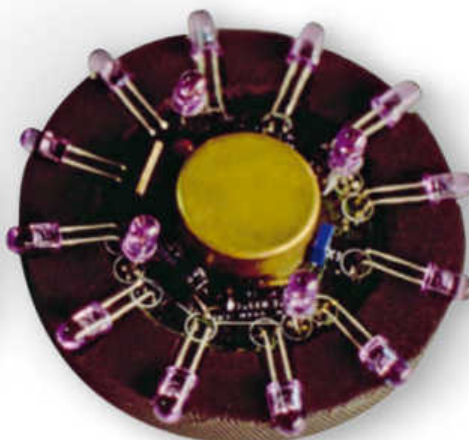
Gordie's wife Colleen passed away in 2009 from Pick's disease, a rare neurological disorder, and Murray also coordinated her medical care in her final years.

Gordie had his stroke while living with Cathy and her family in Texas, and earlier in 2015, after a second set of stem cell treatments, he moved up to Toledo so he could stay with Murray while continuing his rehabilitation. The move up north was also designed in part to move Gordie close to his support system and many friends in Michigan.



Barring any further medical setbacks, Gordie will live the rest of his days with Murray and his family in Toledo. “My dad is with his final team and he'll be staying with us,” Murray said. “It's such a thrill to be able to take care of your hero.”

– JOHN HUMPHREY



FOXTRAX PUCK'S COMPLEX LEGACY

It was loved by some, hated by others. But one thing is certain: the "glow puck" left an indelible mark on TV

A HUMBLE LITTLE PUCK changed television sports forever during the 46th NHL All-Star Game, 20 years ago, in 1996, when the Fox Network debuted its FoxTrax System. It was a special effect that tracked every movement of the puck, then superimposed a bluish glow around it for television viewers – all in real-time. It was the first augmented reality system used in sports, merging computer graphics with live sports.

The breakthrough, however, was met with mixed response. "The more casual fans, or even those who were just learning about hockey, tended to love it," said Rick Cavallaro, the chief engineer and project manager of FoxTrax. "A lot of hardcore fans did not. But even among hardcore fans, a lot of them seemed to like one aspect or another of it."

The idea for FoxTrax came out of a conversation between David Hill, president of Fox Sports from 1993 to 1997, and Stan Honey, the VP of Technology at News Corp., Fox's parent company. Fox Sports had

acquired the national broadcast rights for NHL games from 1994-95 to 1998-99, and Honey approached Hill with the idea of inserting virtual billboards into live sporting events. But Hill suggested something that would make a bigger splash. "When Fox got the rights to hockey, it was an incredibly low-rated sport in the U.S.," Hill said. "If you can't see what the key implement of a sport is doing all the time, you'll have difficulty following it. So I said, let's try

themselves were outfitted with special tripod heads that would detect the pan, tilt and zoom, ensuring that the tracking system and game footage would properly line up. "Our group that developed it did not know the first thing about broadcast sports," Cavallaro said. "We were a bunch of Silicon Valley geeks. There was a steep learning curve for us."

All this data was fed into a trailer outside the arena, affectionately dubbed the "Puck Truck." Computers would read the data and render the bluish glow that was superimposed over the puck. When the puck was obscured by a player or by the near boards, the blue glow would highlight where it was. When the puck was passed, a blue comet tail followed it. Most noticeably, when the puck was shot hard, it was followed by a bright red streak, and viewers could easily see the path of the

“THE MORE CASUAL FANS TENDED TO LOVE IT...A LOT OF HARDCORE FANS DID NOT

– Rick Cavallaro

and make the puck glow."

A lot was necessary to make the effect work. Infrared emitters and a battery were inserted into a puck, and to pick up the transmitted signal, infrared cameras were situated in the rafters and near the TV cameras. The TV cameras

puck if it was deflected or redirected. A speed readout would also display on-screen if the puck was shot over 70 mph. All of this was accomplished live, needing only a 10-frame delay (about one-third of a second) for the effects to be inserted. "I think what the fans liked the

LIGHTS, CAMERAS, ACTION

It took a series of infrared emitters and special cameras to create the "glow puck" effect.

least were the bright graphics," Honey said. "I don't know how they would have reacted if we just put a simple mark on the ice under the puck instead."

Many of today's on-screen graphics seen during televised sports can trace its roots back to the FoxTrax. Honey left News Corp. in 1998 and co-founded Sportsvision, a company that develops enhancement for sports broadcasts. Cavallaro and others from the FoxTrax team joined him. Since then, Sportsvision has developed numerous innovations: the virtual first-down line in football, NASCAR's racecar tracking system, baseball's strike zone graphics and the virtual ads on the glass in hockey are all descendants of the glow puck. "Broadcasters have developed a sensitivity about how you use the technology to tell a story, how to do that in a way that adds to the sport instead of getting in the way," Cavallaro said. "I hope that if (the glow puck) were reintroduced that even hockey fans, the purists, would say that we're bringing something to the broadcast. I would love a second crack." – **SAL BARRY**



RED RIFLE

While many thought it was cartoonish, the streaking puck made it easier for some to follow.

BEST ROOKIE CLASS EVER?

The hype was huge, only to be snuffed by slumps and injuries. But don't count 2016's rooks out yet

IN 2005-06, THERE WAS CROSBY and Ovechkin. Ten years later it's McDavid and Eichel. The parallels were obviously hard to ignore, which is why many were pegging this year's rookie class to be the best since 2005-06, maybe better.

That obviously hasn't been the case so far. While they've both been as good as advertised, McDavid hasn't played since November thanks to a broken collarbone and Eichel has only started to pick up his scoring pace over the last month or so. That means neither will replicate the gaudy numbers Crosby and Ovechkin posted in their first season.

Despite that, the strength of this year's rookie class may still live up to its billing. That may seem odd considering only two players, Artemi Panarin and Max Domi, were on pace for more than 60 points, but the relative strength and efficiency of the 2015-16 rookies in comparison to their veteran peers is higher than usual.

To measure that, we put every player over the past decade in the same context. Instead of points or points-per-game, we used points-per-60 minutes to get a true sense of a player's scoring efficiency, since many rookies don't get the minutes and leeway that veterans get. Then we looked at what percentile each player fell into in comparison to the rest of the league, eliminating the bias that comes with changing scoring levels.

Here's McDavid for example. He's scoring at 3.08 points-per-60 – much lower than Crosby's rookie clip of 3.82 – but both players were in the exact same percentile: better than almost 99 percent of the league. Basically, if McDavid keeps up this pace, his rookie season will be theoretically on par with Crosby's.

As for the rest of this year's rookie class, it's unlikely they're better than the 2005-06 contingent where the average percentile of the top 15 was 88.2 percent. This year's crop



CONNOR MCDAVID

is at 83.1 percent, which is just behind last season's (85.5) and 2008-09's (83.9). So while they may not be "the best," "the best since" is still within reach with half a season still left to play.

And that's the importance of putting these things in the proper context. The totals may not look as good, but the league's scoring environment has changed to the point where our expectations should, too.

With McDavid back, and Eichel finding his groove, there's still plenty of time for this year's rookies to meet the pre-season hype, even if that supreme class from a decade ago won't be topped.

— DOMINIK LUSZCZYNSZYN

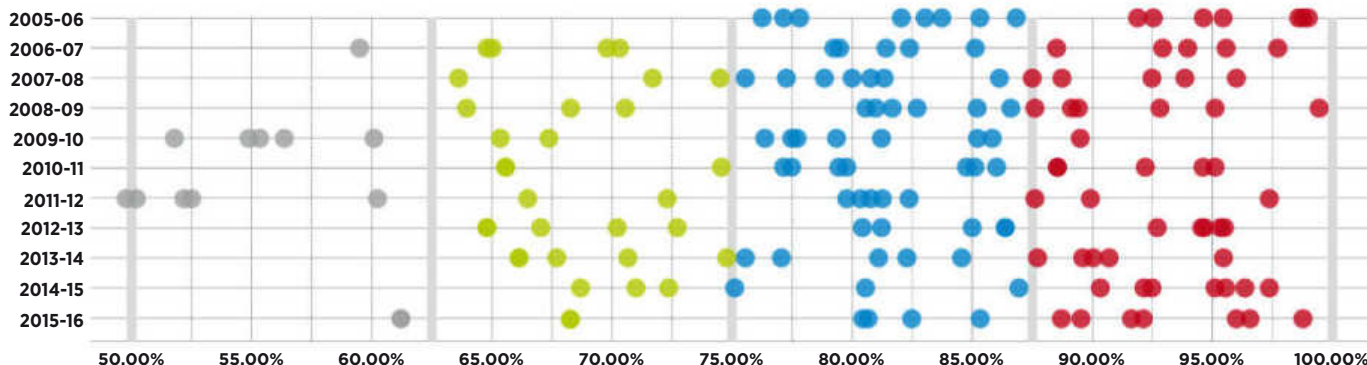
BEST OF THE BEST

WHO'S THE TOP rookie of the past 10 years? If you look at it in terms of overall scoring percentile versus all players in the league that season, it's not who you'd think.

PLAYER	YEAR	PCT.
1. Bobby Ryan	2008-09	99.2%
2. Connor McDavid	2015-16	98.8%
3. Sidney Crosby	2005-06	98.8%
4. Alex Ovechkin	2005-06	98.3%
5. Marek Svatos	2005-06	98.0%
6. Evgeni Malkin	2006-07	97.9%
7. Mark Stone	2014-15	97.4%
8. R. Nugent-Hopkins	2011-12	97.4%
9. Artemi Panarin	2015-16	96.6%
10. Johnny Gaudreau	2014-15	96.3%

FRESH FIFTEEN

WITH CHANGING SCORING ENVIRONMENTS, percentiles better reflect a player's stats across different seasons. Each dot represents a top 15 rookie in points-per-60 and where he fits in the league for that season.





NOT MAD NOMAD

Scott's have-fists-will-travel hockey life belies his smarts and heart. Just ask any teammate

IT WASN'T EXACTLY A "THEY brought their f---in' toys with them!" moment, but when Mark Osborne first laid eyes on John Scott, he reacted with the same type of incredulity Reggie Dunlop did when he encountered the Hanson Brothers in *Slap Shot*. Being a good Christian, Osborne asked St. Michael's Majors scout Jack Ferguson exactly what this young man was doing in training camp. "I told him, 'He's 6-foot-8 and we got him in the 19th round. What do you want?'" Ferguson recalls telling the coach. "He was just this nice, quiet boy who couldn't skate very well."

Scott was quickly cut by the Majors in the fall of 1999, and his road to being selected for

this year's All-Star Game has been as long as his reach, which is really, really long. Scott was axed from two Jr. B teams that season, played Jr. C, was picked up by Chicago of the NAHL the next year, went on to play four years at Michigan Tech...and you get the picture.

Say what you will about Scott being voted by the fans as captain of the Pacific Division team for the All-Star Game – a situation that got even stranger after he was demoted to the AHL then later traded to Montreal in mid-January – but when you play 285 games in the NHL, that's an accomplishment, particularly when you consider Scott's beginnings. Take, for example, that his family moved to

SIZE MATTERS

Scott doesn't see a lot of ice time, but when he's not on the bench he's usually in front of the net.



St. Catharines from Edmonton when a tornado ripped apart the Scott family's trailer.

Yes, trailer. "We lived in a trailer park north of the city, and our trailer was literally gone, so we had nowhere to go back to,"

leave and start all over," Scott said. "You can't really get too close to people or let them in too much because you're going to leave in eight months, probably. But you want to get to know them. It's a weird situation."

Let's you think Scott is a mouth-breathing lunkhead – he actually doesn't really care if people think of him that way – consider he managed to get his degree in mechanical engineering from Michigan Tech. For his graduate project, he and

“EVERY CITY I GO TO, I MEET THESE GREAT PEOPLE, AND THEN I HAVE TO LEAVE AND START OVER – John Scott

Scott said. "My dad was from St. Catharines, so we went back there and lived with my grandparents for a year. Then my dad saved enough money and sold his beloved Harley Davidson so we could buy a house."

If you're getting the impression Scott comes from humble roots, you'd be right. His father worked, and still works, construction. Scott knows the value of a hard day's work, and he knows how quickly everything can change. In his 10th year in pro hockey, Scott has never had more than a two-year deal and is on his seventh NHL organization. It is something of a nomadic lifestyle for him. When he joined the Arizona Coyotes to start this season, he and his wife Danielle – "She's a biomedical engineer, so she's the smart one," Scott said – decided it would be best for the family to stay at their home base in Traverse City, Mich. The Scotts have two young daughters and are waiting for a set of twins, who are expected to arrive sometime in early March. "Every city I go to I meet these great people and develop these great relationships, and then I have to

Chris Conner, the only other player from his cohort to play 100 NHL games, had to rebuild and retrofit a snowmobile to make it more energy efficient and decrease its emissions. "We went right down to the last nut," Scott said. "We had to take weight off, shave stuff off here and there, redo the carburetor, redo the transmission. I think our grade point on that was a 3.4 or something (out of four)."



STAND-UP GUY

Scott's willingness to go to battle for his mates has given him nearly 300 NHL games.

EVA, GABRIELLA &
JOHN SCOTT

It was at Michigan Tech that Scott found some trouble, facing three charges in his junior year in connection with an incident in which he allegedly intentionally rammed another car with his while driving impaired. But since then, Scott has learned to tame the beast within. Having two girls helps, and his wife teases him that the twins will also be girls, creating some sort of karma balance.

Scott is like a lot of other players who play the part he does. They approach their role in a business-like manner, knowing it's what they have to do to stay in the league and separating it from their off-ice persona. Scott is a doting husband and father and, despite not playing much over the past couple of seasons, he always manages to find NHL work and is hugely popular with his teammates. That has to count for something. "You go somewhere new, and people think you're this big a--hole that nobody is going to like, and it takes people time to warm up to you," Scott said. "Every tough guy I meet is a really nice, soft-spoken guy who's down to earth. I've never met a guy who does my job who's a d---. But I've met a lot of skill guys who are d---s." — **KEN CAMPBELL**

▶ ALL-STAR NEED TO KNOW

A new breed of stars will invade star-studded Music City. Here's the inside track on what to expect from the NHL's revamped format, including 3-on-3 and a \$1 million prize



▶ **THE NHL ALL-STAR GAME** comes to Nashville this year, with a brand-new format and a viral-inspired controversy that already has the NHL considering changes to the way fans participate in the voting process.

In terms of nuts and bolts, the skills competition will take place Saturday, Jan. 30 at Bridgestone Arena, kicking off at 7 p.m. EST. Fans will gather back at the rink the next day at 5 p.m. for the games — that's right, games with an 's.' Because this year's festivities will be done with four divisional teams playing against each other in a 3-on-3 format. There will be three 20-minute games in all, with the Pacific playing the Central in one semifinal and the Metro taking on the Atlantic in the other. The winners of those matches will converge in the final, with the ultimate champions splitting a \$1 million purse. If a game is tied after 20 minutes, the proceedings will go to a shootout.

The coaches were picked based on divisional standings, so Gerard Gallant (Florida),

Darryl Sutter (L.A.), Barry Trotz (Washington) and Lindy Ruff (Dallas) got the nods. Each squad is comprised of 11 players (six forwards, three defensemen and two goalies) and the fans selected the captains via an online vote. Jaromir Jagr, Alex Ovechkin, Patrick Kane and John Scott were the elected choices. And this is when the record needle skips.

Yes, Arizona Coyotes enforcer John Scott will captain the Pacific Division, thanks to a viral online campaign promoted most notably by Puck Daddy blogger Greg Wyshynski. Scott didn't ask for the backing, but he has since made it known that his family is excited for the experience. Because of the Scott vote, however, the NHL is already considering changes to the fan-voting portion of the event.

And because Nashville is hosting, there will be country music aplenty. Some of the names involved include Dierks Bentley (a true hockey fan), Eli Young Band and Big and Rich. Get ready for a good time. — **RYAN KENNEDY**



NHL ALL-STARS | 2015-16

Jersey HOUND

Are there more divisive sweaters out there than the annual All-Star Game editions? Maybe there would be if the Leafs and Wings switched colors. Otherwise we're left with the all-stars, where jersey design has gone off in all sorts of unpredictable directions, from throwbacks to neon.

For this year's installment in Nashville, the stars will wear a clean, simple version influenced by the Predators and the city they represent. Your guitar pick crest (middle) is there, plus Tennessee's three stars on the neck. — **RYAN KENNEDY**

NHL ADAPTS AND THRIVES

Introduction of coach's challenge and 3-on-3 overtime produces instant and positive results in first half of 2015-16

RULES ARE MADE TO GUIDE behavior, and new rules aim to change it. By that measure, the NHL's two main changes this season seem to be working well.

A mid-season look at these new rules – the coach's challenge and 3-on-3 overtime – reveals that they've had an immediate impact, and the league is already pondering how to improve them. "Both rules have been pretty good, and I think it's going to take a full year to make them run smoother and consistently," said Colin Campbell, the NHL's executive vice-president and director of hockey operations. "That's always part of working with a new rule."

Making goalie interference subject to challenge has forced players to be more careful around the crease. Stephen Walkom, vice-president and director of officiating, disclosed that penalties for the infraction are down nearly 50 percent over last season's first half. "Players are working hard and getting traffic in front of the goalies, but they're not going into goalies intentionally as much and running the risk of having a goal taken down. It's not worth the risk."

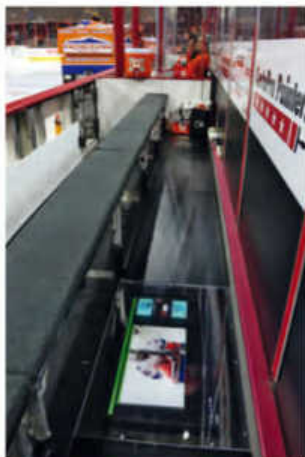
Similarly, Walkom added that players are working harder to stay onside, because video review of offside calls can also negate a goal. "We told our officials to make the correct call, not to make safety calls," he said. "We might have had half these plays blown down last year, just to be safe. But that could have taken away a good goal. With the checks and balances in the coach's hand (through the coach's chal-

lenge), the players are more cognizant of staying onside."

While the league controls the overhead cameras used in goalie interference challenges, the offside challenges are currently dependent on using TV images to make the calls, which can slow down the process. Campbell said the NHL will install experimental overhead cameras on the bluelines during the All-Star Game. If that works, they may become a feature of the review system down the road.

As for other tweaks, Walkom said he's mulling a slightly larger screen to assist the officials next season even though "the resolution is unbelievable" on the current tablets.

And Campbell added the league may ask the GMs to consider imposing a time limit on coaches to decide on using their challenges next season. They'll also discuss if some or all challenges should be made in the league's video room instead of on the ice, though Walkom acknowledged the of-



ficials are pleased to be part of the review process now.

NBC's Pierre McGuire, who first advocated instituting coach's challenges around 10 years ago on his various media platforms, is happy with these initial steps. He'd like to see the NHL add review for pucks shot over the glass and "friendly-fire" high sticking calls.

If the coach's challenge has been just as successful and wildly exciting. "It's been outstanding," said Detroit GM Ken Holland, a leading advocate of this change. "One of the things we wanted to accomplish was to have more games decided in overtime. That's up dramatically. What's equally important, even if a goal isn't scored, is it's very entertaining. There's so much open ice that at any moment you can have a stretch pass and a 2-on-1 or a breakaway."

Devils coach John Hynes, who coached 3-on-3 in the AHL last season, says the NHL version is "more disciplined, probably because of the caliber and the intellect of the players in the NHL."

Hynes thinks NHL coaches have put more of an emphasis on details in the 3-on-3 as the

NOT LONG FOR THE JOB

The league's video room may soon review all challenges, but on-ice officials help out for now.

season has progressed, especially the timing and discipline of line changes. "If you have a bad line change, a lot of times there's a bad line rush right away," he said. "It's basically all man-on-man, and you have to skate and have to work. You can't overextend your shift. You can't relax or take any time off."

He finds his peers often rely on the same philosophies they do 5-on-5. "Some guys feel their strength is their 'D,' or they have last change at home, and the other guy puts out two high-end forwards and a really high-end 'D,' so you basically have three elite offensive players on. The home coach may put out two 'D' and one forward, because they feel more comfortable. What I've seen throughout is different matchups based on personnel."

But with all the open ice, coaches can't control the action to the same extent. "It's not system-oriented," Walkom said. "It's more pond hockey-oriented, which is great, because the fans get a bit of the history of hockey at a real hockey game."

As for the players, Hynes said, "The guys that play it enjoy it."

"The guys that don't play it," he added with a laugh, "don't enjoy it as much." – **STU HACKEL**

PRIVATE SCREENING

NHL benches are outfitted with monitors for coaches to review before deciding on challenges.

COACH'S CHALLENGE



The NHL introduced coach's challenges for the 2015-16 season. Coaches can only challenge offside plays leading to goals and goaltender interference leading to goals. The league initiates reviews within the final minute of the third period or in overtime

121

TOTAL
88 UPHELD, 33 OVERTURNED

77

GOALIE INTERFERENCE
61 UPHELD, 16 OVERTURNED

44

OFFSIDE
27 UPHELD, 17 OVERTURNED

9

INITIATED BY HOCKEY OPS
8 UPHELD, 1 OVERTURNED



MIKE BABCOCK



ERIC VOGEL & JASON NOLD

HOLIDAY SPIRIT

A young goaltender gets the gift of new gear and guidance from a former pro with a big heart

ANGELA MASTRANGELO couldn't have known buying goaltending equipment for her son, Jason Nold, would result in one of the most heartwarming gestures she's ever experienced, just as Eric Vogel couldn't have known he was about to meet and later bring an incredible amount of joy to two complete strangers.

Mastrangelo, 38, and Vogel, 26, met in October when Nold, then 13, was looking to upgrade his goalie gear. Vogel, a goaltending specialist at Total Hockey who was selected in the 2014 Federal League draft, helped his two customers and gave his personal number to Mastrangelo in case she or her son had any questions.

Two weeks later, she got in touch. "She said he needed help with some goalie stuff and this and that," Vogel recalled. "I said maybe I'd see Jason and his father at the rink, and she said, 'Well, there's a story behind that.'"

When Nold was three, his father passed away in a motor-cycle accident. Mastrangelo, a veterinary nurse, was raising her son alone. It was then Vogel learned about Nold's battle with pediatric autoimmune neuropsychiatric syndrome. The disorder's attack on Nold's system left him struggling with attention deficit hyperactivity

disorder and obsessive compulsive disorder.

Vogel began to help Nold more and more, giving him pointers, practising with him and lending an ear. "He's helped me so much," Nold said. "Between goaltending and being an influence to me by the commitment he puts into hockey, it's priceless time with him."

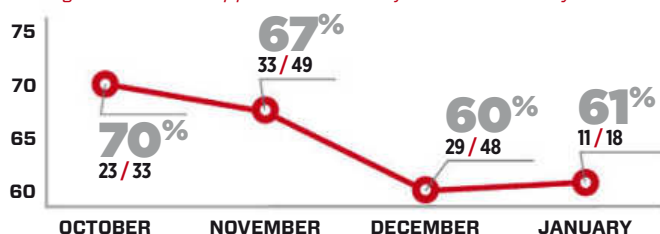
But Vogel decided he needed to do even more for Mastrangelo and Nold. He took to GGSU, a Facebook community for goaltenders, told the story and asked for donations. Vogel thought he'd raise \$50 and potentially land a piece of gear for Nold, but he was shocked when roughly 300 people donated a combined \$1,530 and several pieces of equipment.

Vogel's big reveal came one week before Christmas after he set up an open skate for Nold. Vogel brought Mastrangelo to the rink, presented her with a card and Nold with the gear. "There are no words to say thank you, not only to him but to strangers around the world who helped me through the GGSU community," Mastrangelo said. "It's overwhelming and very, very humbling. How do you say thank you? You can't." — **JARED CLINTON**

Read an extended version of this feature at THN.COM/VOGEL

3-ON-3 OVERTIME

The advent of 3-on-3 was designed to end more games without shootouts. Early results were promising, but the rate of games ending in overtime dropped as teams adjusted defensively



SHOOTOUTS

Shootouts have undoubtedly plummeted league-wide since 3-on-3 arrived, dropping in frequency by almost half



*All stats through 629 games of the season



ENGINEERED FOR LONG HAULS

Doan has lots of mileage on him, but his bodily engine purrs like a kitten. Tailoring training to his age is key

AFTER 20-PLUS YEARS OF interviews, Shane Doan has had just about every kind of question, good and bad, thrown his way. This one, however, seems to catch him a little bit off guard.

When asked to compare his body to some kind of motorized transport, he laughs at the goofy question but, ever the good sport, Doan gives it some thought and willingly plays along. "I'd probably be along the lines of a pickup truck that's going to last a while and going to be multipurpose," he said, still chuckling. "Hopefully, it's got a big enough engine that it can pull things."

He couldn't have picked a better comparison. At 6-foot-1, 223 pounds, Doan is built like a truck. Now in his 20th campaign, he's definitely been durable, and he hasn't missed more than 13 games in any season since 1997-98. As a physical, two-way player with nearly 400 goals and more than 900 points, as well as 44 career fights, he's got the multipurpose part covered, too. And in his 12th year as captain, he's used to hauling his team along.

At 39, however, with nearly 1,500 games played, that big ol' engine requires a little more fine tuning to run at peak performance.

Veterans like Doan react differently to training than rookies do, so they can't work out the same way. Whereas his 20-year-old teammates, Max Domi and Anthony Duclair, get a more general training program because their bodies adapt easier to a simpler stimulus, Doan has a more specified workout regimen. He has had everything except the kitchen sink thrown at him in the gym, so he requires more tweaks and subtleties in his program to force his body to adapt. "You just have to be more strategic, balancing any asymmetries that he has or even the amount of times he trains per week," said JP Major, strength and conditioning coach for the Arizona Coyotes. "I keep the volume a little bit lower than the younger guys. He's still strong as a house and still lifts heavy. It's just a matter of when, how often and how his body

A CUB AND A LION

Rookie Domi trains differently than Doan, as Domi recovers and metabolizes much faster.

BATTLING BOREDOM

Doan's training must be tweaked constantly to keep his body guessing and adapting.

“
**HE'S STILL
STRONG AS A
HOUSE, AND
HE STILL LIFTS
HEAVY**

— JP Major

responds to it that are going to be a bit different from some of these younger guys."

When it comes to training, the biggest factors for Doan, and veterans like him, are preventing injuries and managing recovery, which weren't exactly high on the priority list early in his career. Doan admits he barely did any kind of warmup until about six or seven years ago. He now has a comprehensive stretching routine that he runs through every time he practices, plays or trains. All players do, but veterans on the back nine of their careers can't skip or skim their way through and get away with it like a rookie can once in a while. The risk of pulls, sprains or strains, particularly with hips and groins, is



TOP: JEFF WINICK/NHU VIA GETTY IMAGES; BOTTOM: NORM HALL/NHU VIA GETTY IMAGES

so much greater with veterans than freshmen because their tissue isn't as pliable.

To help mitigate that, Doan, like a lot of vets, takes glucosamine for his joints. Major likens it to pouring water over Play-Doh. When cartilage gets dried out, it gets brittle and can break, leading to joint problems. Like water on Play-Doh, glucosamine gives cartilage more pliability and malleability, making it easier to work with and less susceptible to injury.

Doan can still train as hard as he could in his 20s but just can't do it as often, because his body needs more time to recover than it did 10 or 20 years ago. Major tracks how long, how often and how hard Doan works out, whether it's in the gym, at a practice or during a game, and adjusts his training schedule accordingly, because he won't recover quite as quickly as, say, a Domi or a Duclair.

So Doan can't train like a 20-year-old. Nor can he cheat on his diet like a rookie and get away with it. "If a 20-year-old eats white pasta and ice cream for his pregame and Shane does the same, the way his body uses that fuel is going to be far less efficient than the younger guy who has a different metabolism entirely," Major said. "It's about putting a better fuel source in his high-mileage engine to operate at an optimal level."

There's that mechanical metaphor again. Doan is actually quite used to it. Major



goes to that well regularly with him during training sessions. "He's like, 'Hey, you got miles on you,'" Doan said. "The one he likes is, 'Hey, sometimes, you'll hear a rattle in your engine, and if it's a new car you panic, but when it's an old car it's not a big deal. I know that sound...so you don't have to worry about it.' He's used that one on me before, too."

Keeping it light and playful is important for Doan, because after more than two decades in the gym he is at the point in his career where he needs a little extra giddyap to get motivated. He can't just show up, lift and leave. Ever the competitor – with himself as much as with opponents – he likes to have something, anything, on the line when he trains.

In the off-season, along with his gym workouts, Doan plays a myriad of sports, including basketball, soccer, squash and tennis – all of which he admits he's "not good" or "terrible" at. But that's not the point. The focus is on maintaining his athleticism by incorporating multidirectional workouts via different sports that change speed, change reactions and



A CARROT TO CHASE

Doan functions best in a workout when he has a goal or anything that makes a game out of it.

change his hip direction. And it helps him work out, because it feels more like playing than training, even if Doan doesn't always play by the rules off the ice. "If you can make it a game, he'd spend all day in the gym, he just loves it," Major said, laughing. "But he cheats. He calls it 'bending the rules,' but it's cheating. Anything to win, and the game gets extended until he wins."

"That is one of the things that keeps him in the game. Not only does he love it more than anything. He's so competitive, it doesn't matter what it is. He wants to win, so he's going to do whatever he can to do that." – **RONNIE SHUKER**

SPLIT SQUAT

with Dumbbells

Hockey players are often one-side dominant, so balancing out any asymmetries is important in off-ice training. Here is an exercise that Major uses regularly with Doan.



- 1 Stand in a staggered stance with your rear foot elevated on a bench and your front foot forward.
- 2 Hold a dumbbell in each hand and let them hang at your sides.
- 3 Lower your body while maintaining good posture. Keep your front knee in line with your foot without it going past your toes.



- 4 At the bottom, drive through your heel to extend the knee and hip to return to the starting position.
- 5 Finish the set on one side then repeat on the other.



SHANE DOAN



PENNY WISE AND PUCK SAVVY

On and off the ice, Moore did the dirty work necessary to succeed, whether it was fuelling The Rocket with a steady dose of passes or giving employees jobs for life

By **Ken Campbell**

JOHN MOORE CAN RECALL TIMES, a lot of them, when he would poke his head into his father's office and see him tapping away at his calculator, verifying purchase orders and invoices to make sure they all balanced to the penny. If they didn't, he would send it back down the food chain and tell the person responsible to fix the situation.

His reasoning was simple. "He always said, 'If you're off by a penny, that's just a digit,'" John said. " 'You could be off by a thousand, you could be off by a million.

It's just a digit.' He taught me that at a very early age."

It was that pursuit of perfection, that stubborn inability to live with an invoice that was out by a single penny, that drove Dickie Moore. It elevated him from working-class Montreal to the NHL and a Hall of Fame career, then provided his moral compass for his life after hockey as the founder and president of Dickie Moore Rentals, a successful company that supplies construction sites with everything from office trailers to portable toilets to heavy equipment. Until just a couple weeks before he died in mid-Decem-

DICKIE



MOORE



>DICKIE
MOORE
1931-2015

ber at 84 years old, Moore would wait for John to pick him up at 7 a.m., with the two stopping for a quick breakfast before heading to the office for a full day's work.

Moore always chalked much of his success to being lucky. But you get the impression that was for public consumption because deep inside him a fire burned that was as wild and hot as anyone's in the history of the game. There might have been some luck involved along the way, but it was Moore that took those bits of luck and exploited them to the fullest, wringing every bit of good karma from them with his bare hands. Take his partnership with Maurice Richard, for example. Richard often said Moore was the greatest left winger he ever played with. And do you know why? Because for all of The Rocket's greatness, he wasn't a defensive demon. Moore earned his place on Richard's line and his admiration by doing much of the heavy lifting in the defensive zone and in the corners.

Any discussion of the greatest left wingers the game has ever seen includes the likes of Bobby Hull, Alex Ovechkin, Luc Robitaille, Brendan Shanahan and Frank Mahovlich. But it also includes Moore to anyone who watched hockey in the 1950s or has a firm grasp of the game's history. Had there been a Selke Trophy at that time, Moore would

have had as many as Bob Gainey and Guy Carbonneau. But the beauty of Moore's game was that he could play it any way you wanted. If you wanted to grind it out and go to war along the boards, he could do that. Want to play a skill game? Well, a player doesn't win two scoring championships without a healthy dose of that. Toughness? One of those scoring titles was won while playing the last three months of the season with a broken wrist.

Moore's name might not come to mind when people talk about the all-time greats, which is unfortunate. When The Hockey News published a book ranking the top 100 Canadiens of all-time, Moore was ranked 11th, behind both Richard brothers, Jean Beliveau, Doug Harvey and Jacques Plante on the greatest dynasty the game has ever seen. But Moore knew his place in the game. He negotiated contracts the same way he did invoices, not leaving a penny on the

his office without knocking and talk hockey with Moore for a half an hour before they would ever get down to business. Moore was a man of the people that way. An autograph never went unsigned, a question never unanswered, a handshake always returned. And it paid off for Moore, too, who used his status as an iconic Canadien as a business advantage. "I had to tell him once, 'You know, Dad, it's a little different when you're in a waiting room and you ask to meet the purchasing agent and your name is Dickie Moore compared to when you're in the waiting room and you're John Moore,'" John said. "He didn't realize you have to wait."

That hallmark stubbornness, which served Moore so well, led to his less-than-amicable departure from the Canadiens in 1963. Moore made two comebacks, one with the Maple Leafs in 1964-65, then the most improbable one of all with the St. Louis Blues in 1967-68 when he led them in play-

**I PICKED UP THE CHEQUE THAT MORNING AND
THREW IT AT THE BANK MANAGER AND SAID, 'GIVE
ME EVERYTHING BACK.' THAT'S HOW IT ALL STARTED**

- DICKIE MOORE

table. Moore's 96 points in 1958-59 were the most recorded in history at the time and stood as the league's single-season benchmark for the next seven years.

But at the same time he was winning Stanley Cups for the Canadiens, he was feathering his nest for a life after hockey. While his contemporaries spent their summers on the golf course and having the occasional beer, Moore was building his business. In 1961, behind one of the three Dairy Queen outlets he owned in suburban Montreal, Moore started a small company that rented out tools and garden equipment. He began the business with a \$2,000 loan. When the bank later gave Moore an ultimatum to either liquidate or find another lender, he scraped together the money to keep his business going. "I picked up the cheque that morning and threw it at the bank manager and said, 'Give me everything back.'" Moore told The Hockey News in 2008. "That's how it all started."

That company now has about 150 employees and branches in Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto and has had people retire with the company after spending their entire working lives alongside Moore - that's the kind of loyalty he engendered. Though he ran a very hard bargain, he was known more for his penchant for making fair deals. Salesmen and suppliers would walk right into

off goals and points in their run to the Stanley Cup final. Despite the parting, Moore mended ways with the Canadiens and became the unofficial leader of their alumni group. One summer, he was approached by a group trying to help a former journeyman player for the Habs. It was raising money to purchase a van for the former NHLer that would accommodate his wheelchair. The group asked Moore if the Canadiens alumni could help out with a small donation or perhaps some memorabilia. Moore told the group to leave it with him, and within a couple days he raised enough money to pay for the van in full.

For the charmed life Moore led, there was also tragedy. His son Richard Jr. was killed in a car accident in 1973 at the age of 16. Moore talked about how his son told him he was going to take Dickie Moore Rentals across Canada, but he never had the chance. Moore said when he got home from identifying his son, Doug Harvey was waiting for him outside his house. "I think he escaped by working so hard," John said. "It would be easy to sit at home and cry. But he bounced right back and came into work and kept the machine going. I think that's how he dealt with the pain."

None of those who knew Moore well were surprised. **TEN**





DRIVEN

WHAT SETS LARKIN APART FROM HIS
TEENAGE PEERS ISN'T HIS SUBLIME
SKILL OR SUPREME DISCIPLINE. IT'S
HIS DOGGED DETERMINATION TO WIN
AT ALL COSTS AND BECOME THE

BEST PLAYER
— ON THE —
PLANET

BY KEN CAMPBELL



DYLAN LARKIN

WHOEVER IT WAS THAT NAMED THE TOWN OF WATERFORD, MICHIGAN, — COULD CLEARLY — TAKE A HINT.



The hamlet where Hall of Famer Pat LaFontaine's family settled when they moved from St. Louis is 35 square miles and home to 34 lakes, which means you can't walk a mile without getting your feet wet. There's Cass Lake, Clam Lake, Huntoon Lake, Little Silver Lake, Upper Silver Lake, Pleasant Lake, Loon Lake, Lotus Lake, Schoolhouse Lake and Wormer Lake, among others. There's also Our Lady of the Lakes Church, Christ of the Lakes Catholic Church, Williams Lake Church of the Nazarene, Great Lakes Baptist Church and Wellspring Bible Church. The town's nature center alone has 11 ponds on it. And just in case you needed to be clubbed over the head, the Charter Township of Waterford has trademarked the term "Lakeland Paradise." The serial number is 76611742. You can check that.

It turns out Dylan Larkin could take a hint, too. He didn't grow up on one of the hundreds of ponds that run off those lakes in Waterford, but it was just a short walk down the street and a few backyard short-

cuts to a pond that ran off Oakland Lake. It was there Larkin laboriously planted the seeds that have germinated into one of the best, and most unlikely, rookie campaigns in the NHL this season. Sure, he'd play shinny with his older brother and cousins and the kids in the neighborhood, but what has him in the NHL at the age of 19 and in the conversation for the Calder Trophy is what Detroit Red Wings coach Jeff Blashill calls "unbelievable inner drive." Long before the others would get there and long after they left, Larkin would be out on the pond by himself, working on his skills and finding his inner Zen. "Just me and a puck and a net," Larkin said. "That was my childhood. Up here (in the NHL), you want to put up points and win, but there it's just about hockey."

It's right around then that you ask to see his birth certificate. He doesn't have it with him, but he assures you there is no mention of Saskatchewan on it anywhere. After all,

Larkin lived what was supposed to be the quintessential Canadian existence. And, as it turns out, his Canadian roots run deep. His father, Kevin, is originally from suburban Toronto and had a hockey scholarship to the University of Maine until he shattered his kneecap playing junior hockey. Kevin was also a top-notch soccer player, the son of Irish immigrants, so at 23 he went on a soccer scholarship to the University of Southern Indiana. It was there he met Denise Jordan, got married and settled in the Detroit area, where he has a business distributing supplies and furniture to beauty salons. Kevin's brother, Jimmy, was a member of the Canadian national soccer team, and their mother still lives in Toronto. "I have a buddy who's originally from Sarnia who does it right up with floodlights on the pond," Kevin said. "On a Saturday night, the kids would be out playing until midnight and we'd all be inside watching *Hockey Night in Canada*."

The results of all those hours on the pond in Waterford are now on full display 38 miles south-east at the Joe Louis Arena. Larkin would have to chase the puck all the way down the pond if he missed the net, and he's now one of the most explosive skaters in the NHL. But it also shows in Larkin's face, which has the perennially rosy cheeks of a kid who spends a lot of his time outside in the winter. It sure isn't going to help him get a legal beer in his hometown any time soon, and it prompted one of his teammates to give him a SpongeBob SquarePants toothbrush and a bottle of gummy bear vitamins when the Red Wings held their Secret Santa gift exchange.

It's one thing to break into the NHL at 19. With players being coached, nourished and prepared for competition better than they ever have, it's becoming increasingly common. But it's quite another to break in with an organization that prides itself on making sure its prospects are overripe. It's not in





Larkin excelled as a freshman at Michigan, finishing second in team scoring at age 18.

the standard Red Wings player contract that every player is mandated to spend two or three years on an iron lung traipsing around minor hockey's backwaters, but it's pretty well understood that's the way Detroit does things. In fact, when Larkin informed the Red Wings last summer he was ready to turn pro after one season at the University of Michigan and a bronze medal with the U.S. at the World Championship, the first thing Wings GM Ken Holland told the family was to make sure they were comfortable with that determination. "I told Dylan and his family that if he was sitting on a bus from Grand Rapids to Rockford in November," Holland recalled, "that was their decision."

Turned out it was the right one for everyone involved. Larkin has helped the Red Wings so far, and he's helped himself. His base salary is \$925,000, and he's a shoo-in to earn his capped performance bonuses totalling \$350,000. He got an extra \$50,000 for being selected to the All-Star Game, and he's well on his way to hitting his other bonuses. But think about this for a minute. Larkin is the youngest player to play a regular shift with the Red Wings in a quarter of a century. Keith Primeau was 18 years and 10 months old when he first appeared for the Red Wings in 1990. Before that you have to go back to Steve Yzerman in 1983. At the age of 19 years and 71 days when he made his NHL debut, Larkin was older than Shawn Burr and Martin Lapointe when he debuted, but Burr and Lapointe did not become full-time Red Wings until they were 20. And while everyone around Larkin is loathe to make comparisons, there's no doubt some

are envisioning Yzerman-like things for the young man who is already being compared to Jonathan Toews. There are those who think it's only a matter of time before Larkin is wearing the 'C' in Detroit. And in case you haven't noticed, when the Red Wings have a player they like, they tend to keep him around for a long time. "He's going to be here forever," said Red Wings captain Henrik Zetterberg, who broke into the league when Larkin was just six. "He's that special."

In the end, he may not be Jonathan Toews, but he will be Detroit's version of Toews. "He'll be the conscience of the Red Wings," Holland said, "the way Steve Yzerman, Nick Lidstrom, Pavel Datsyuk and 'Z' (Zetterberg) have been."

For his part, Larkin does not shy away from the comparisons. He is in an environment where he's set up for success, playing the wing on the top line with Zetterberg, his childhood idol, and Justin Abdelkader. He's playing in an organization that has established a winning culture and has players like Datsyuk and Zetterberg to show him how to live like a pro. At his exit meeting last summer, Larkin was looking for some direction, so Holland told him, "to follow Luke Glendening around like a puppy dog." Every day, Larkin would rise at 5 a.m., to make the 45-minute drive into the city to work out with Glendening and some other Red Wing players at a downtown Detroit gym, and he now shares a house with Glendening and Riley Sheahan and their two dogs. They don't take shortcuts, so Larkin doesn't take shortcuts. His inner drive and quiet confidence are huge factors. "I had 12 goals at

Christmas, and I want more goals," Larkin said. "I want more ice time, and I want to be better on the power play. That's just how I am. Today, we had to get off the ice because the New Jersey Devils are coming on, but I wanted to stay out for 20 more minutes. I've always wanted to be the best player in the world. It's hard, but there's no reason I couldn't be. I'm in a great organization, and I'll just keep working."

One of the reasons Larkin cited for signing with Detroit last summer was that he felt he might have a better chance of making the team now that Blashill had replaced Mike Babcock as coach. Blashill isn't so sure Larkin wouldn't be a regular in the lineup even had Babcock stayed in Detroit. When Blashill was coaching Detroit's AHL affiliate in Grand Rapids last spring, Larkin joined the Griffins for their Western Conference final series against the Utica Comets after playing in the World Championship and signing with the Red Wings. The plan was to use Larkin along the half wall on the power play, so after the morning skate prior to Game 5, Larkin was out with Griffins assistant coach David Noel-Bernier long after everyone had left the ice, coming off the half wall and shooting pucks at an empty net. Incensed, Blashill told Noel-Bernier to immediately get Larkin off the ice. "It looked to me like a young kid who had too much energy and not enough brains," Blashill said. "We put him on the power play and in the second period, he walks off the half wall and goes shelf. My assistant comes to me and says, 'That's what he was working on for 20 minutes.' You can watch the skill set



DYLAN LARKIN



WINGED WINNERS

The Red Wings have had five players win the Calder Trophy, amazingly none of them named Howe, Yzerman or Lidstrom. Two of them went on to the Hall of Fame, but none of them played their entire careers as Red Wings.



CARL VOSS
C, 25, 1932-33

Voss is one of only two men in history, Lionel Conacher being the other, to win a Stanley Cup and a Grey Cup.



JIM MCFADDEN
C, 27, 1947-48

Until 42 years later when Sergei Makarov won the Calder at the age of 31, McFadden held the distinction of being the oldest player ever to win the award.



TERRY SAWCHUK
G, 21, 1950-51

The greatest Red Wing goalie ever, and perhaps the greatest of all-time, was the top rookie in three pro leagues – the NHL, the AHL and defunct USHL.



GLENN HALL
G, 24, 1955-56

For 14 straight seasons, the Red Wings had Hall or Sawchuk as their No. 1 goalie. Hall was No. 1 for two years until being dealt to Chicago with Ted Lindsay.



ROGER CROZIER
G, 22, 1964-65

He and Sawchuk are the only two players in history to win rookie of the year in the AHL and NHL. He's also the first goaltender to win the Conn Smythe Trophy and the first to win it for a team that failed to win the Cup.



Larkin knows what it's like to have childhood dreams of the Wings. He now plays with guys he cheered for as a kid.

on TV, but it's the inner drive, the perseverance, the maturity, the confidence...those are the things that allow guys to make the jump early."

It has always been that way for Larkin, going back to his days in Waterford, where he played a year up so he could be on the same team as his cousin Adam, who's now a junior defenseman at Yale. Dylan's older brother, Colin, a junior playing Div. III at U-Mass Boston, never let him win and always pushed him to be better. (A younger cousin, Ryan, is a goalie with Miami of Ohio.) It was at a Silver Stick Tournament in Newmarket, Ont., with the Lakeland Hawks that Kevin thought his son was ready to play with the best players in Detroit. They were in the semifinal of the tournament against a team that had St. Louis Blues rookie Robby Fabbrì on it and, came back from a 5-0 deficit to tie the game and send it into overtime.

The overtime format was 5-on-5, with each team removing a player the longer the game remained tied. When it got down to 2-on-2, Dylan lost a faceoff in his end, but Adam corralled the puck and sent Dylan in on a breakaway, and he scored.

From there Larkin made the move to AAA hockey in Detroit with a team of 1996-born players for Belle Tire. That team would go on to win three state championships and one national championship at the bantam level but, more extraordinarily, had nine players drafted to the NHL, including four first-rounders. Larkin and Brendan Perlini were taken in the first round in 2014, and Zach Werenski and Kyle Connor, both late 1996 birthdays, were first-rounders in 2015. Also on that team was Alex Nedeljkovic, a Carolina second-rounder in 2014 who backstopped the U.S. to a bronze medal at the World Junior Championship.

“YOU CAN WATCH THE SKILL SET ON TV, BUT IT’S THE
INNER DRIVE,
THE PERSEVERANCE, THE MATURITY, THE CONFIDENCE...
THOSE ARE THE THINGS THAT ALLOW GUYS TO
MAKE THE JUMP EARLY”



On a team loaded with high-end offensive talent, it was Larkin who was leading the Red Wings in goals with 14 midway through the season.



Larkin soared through the ranks with Belle Tire, eventually becoming captain of the bantam team that won the national championship. But in his minor midget year, with a coveted spot on the U.S. national development team on the line, Larkin broke his ankle in a tournament in November. Heartbroken, he would come to the rink to support his teammates and vowed to be back by the state championship. One night before a game, Larkin quietly pulled aside Belle Tire executive John Kay and told him that he had been selected for the U.S. National Team Development Program next season. He told Kay he didn't want to disrupt the team by announcing it himself. And true to his word, he returned in time to play in the state championship. "A lot of kids would have probably said, 'I got what I wanted and I'm going to sit out and not risk it,'" Kay said. "But that's not the kind of kid Dylan Larkin is."

It was with the NTDP that Larkin really began to take off as an elite prospect. He opened a number of eyes at the WJC in 2015, where he entered the tournament in Jack Eichel's shadow and emerged as the United States' leading scorer with five goals, seven points and a team-leading 24 shots. In the round-robin game against Canada, Larkin scored in the dying minutes to pull the Americans to within a goal before Sam Reinhart scored an empty-netter with less than a minute left. Larkin scored again 12 seconds after that before Max Domi sealed the game with another empty-netter. "You could just see every time Canada scored, he wanted to will his team back into the game," Holland said. "That's what I mean about being the conscience of the team."

Some players come to the understanding a little later than others about what it takes to play in the NHL. Larkin, to his

credit, figured it out early and cemented it in his brain. There are a lot of kids who take their time and are just as good. Some are clueless when they turn pro, others are on the cusp, and others, like Larkin, only need to be told once. The Red Wings have a prospect by the name of Anthony Mantha, who was drafted in the first round the year before Larkin. Mantha is a behemoth

and said there was no way he was going to make our team."

Mantha, though, broke his leg in rookie camp and followed that with a rather mediocre year that drew public criticism from Detroit vice-president Jim Devellano. But now in his second year of pro hockey, Mantha is getting it, working his way through the AHL into a bona fide NHL prospect who

**“SOME ARE CLUELESS
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of a boy-man who scored 120 points in his last year of junior hockey and led his team to the Memorial Cup final. Clamoring for a young, homegrown star, Red Wings fans were begging Holland to have Mantha in the lineup to start his career. Holland responded by saying Mantha would get every chance, but there were no guarantees. "The kid is 6-foot-5," Holland said. "I would have looked like the village idiot if I had come out

could one day be as much of a Red Wing stalwart as Larkin is expected to be. Different path, perhaps the same destination.

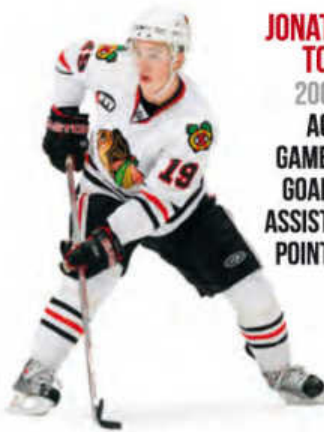
Because Larkin is so fast and strong on his skates, he wins battles for the puck and almost always does the right thing once he gets it. And the skill. Oh, the skill. NHL veteran Mike Cammalleri of the Devils said he worked out with the hockey team at the University of Michigan last year and was

ADJUSTED ROOKIE SEASON STATS

Larkin is commonly compared to two players: Steve Yzerman, the legendary Red Wings captain, and Jonathan Toews, the current Hawks captain blessed with similar skills. Hockey-reference.com's era-adjusted numbers, which also pro-rate Larkin's half season into a full one, show his rookie effort is very much on par.



**STEVE
YZERMAN**
1983-84
AGE: 18
GAMES: 80
GOALS: 31
ASSISTS: 38
POINTS: 69



**JONATHAN
TOEWS**
2007-08
AGE: 19
GAMES: 64
GOALS: 27
ASSISTS: 32
POINTS: 59



**DYLAN
LARKIN**
2015-16
AGE: 19
GAMES: 80
GOALS: 31
ASSISTS: 33
POINTS: 64

amazed at one of Larkin's moves. In one motion, he'll fake a slapshot, actually grazing over the puck with his stick, which makes the goalie bite, and then gets it on his back-hand. Cammalleri marvelled at the move and is still unable to perfect it after Larkin taught it to him. Larkin used it once at the University of Michigan and missed the net. He has yet to use it in the NHL, but he will.

Off the ice has been a bit of an adjustment for Larkin. He, Sheahan and Glendenning have a chef who cooks for them, so that is not a problem. Sheahan said Larkin still occasionally leaves a dirty dish around and Glendenning said, "we've had to teach him a few lessons about being on time," but aside from that Larkin has been a model roommate. When the Red Wings have a day off, and Glendenning and Sheahan are spending their time at the dog park, Larkin will often make the drive to Ann Arbor to have dinner with kids his own age at the University of Michigan. As far as hockey is concerned, Glendenning knows there's very little he can impart to Larkin, but he can counsel him on how to eat, sleep and live like a professional. "It's funny because when we go out he's the famous one, which is awesome," Glendenning said. "He handles it with a lot of grace and style, though."

A lot of that goes back to the humility and the days on the rinks in Waterford. Kay said the Larkins provided a perfect template for the way minor hockey parents should behave. Parents of some star players can be, let's say, rather high maintenance, but Kay recalled the Larkins being humble parents who looked out for the good of the team over the better interests of their son. And there was never any sense



The secret is definitely out on Larkin, who is starting to be targeted by opposing teams.

Dylan was above the fray. In fact, on the day he came to terms with the Red Wings, he was helping his father make deliveries to some beauty salons. "We were loading up the truck at one of my vendors," Kevin said. "He was all excited, and I said, 'Dude, I want two weeks' notice, and you're still working for 10 bucks an hour.'"

In the Red Wings' last game before Christmas, they lost to the Devils after falling behind 3-0 in the first period. After scoring his 13th goal of the season, Larkin was pushed from behind into the end boards by Devils defenseman John Moore. He stayed in the game but went for X-rays afterward and sat out the next game. New Jersey clearly targeted Larkin for a physical going over in that game. He left the rink that night with a handful of sticks, wondering what he did to the Devils to make them so angry at him. Blashill noticed it, too, saying a couple nights before against Calgary the same thing happened. "We're going to have to do a good job of defending him," Blashill said, "and referees around the league have to know that young stars in the league, when they get targeted, they have to make sure they do a good job of calling

penalties. We don't want our young stars targeted, and we don't want lots of fights anymore, so we have to make sure we look after them."

So there are clearly some bumps in the road here. Larkin has never played so grueling a season as he will this year, and the true test began in January when the Red Wings embarked on a stretch of 25 games, 16 on the road, in two months. Included in that is an outdoor game in Denver where Larkin will be one of the few players to say he actually played a lot of hockey outdoors as a kid. "You ask me if I'm surprised that he leads us in goals and leads the league in plus-minus," Blashill said. "I don't know how I couldn't be. We didn't draw it up at the beginning of the season, saying, 'OK, this guy is going to lead us in scoring.'"

Larkin still finds it difficult to wrap his head around the fact he shares a parking lot and a dressing room with players he adored as a kid. He was just 11 years old when stood on Woodward Avenue for the parade for the Red Wings' most recent Stanley Cup in 2008. One of the class assignments at Mason Middle School was to watch every Red Wings playoff game that year. Pretty sweet homework for him. Those were the days when he'd go off by himself and play hockey purely for the love of the game. Things are different now. If you let the laundry pile up or your room gets too messy, it can be overwhelming. If you turn your back on a defenseman, you might end up going headfirst into the boards. But Dylan Larkin is coming along just fine. **THE**



Larkin has discovered great chemistry with Zetterberg, his childhood idol.

KLAS ▶
DAHLBECK

▶ DAVE
TIPPETT

▶ JORDAN
MARTINOOK

▶ ANTHONY
DUCLAIR

MAX ▶
DOMI

POV PUL

ARIZONA

With a bumper crop of rookies, the Coyotes' future is bright. But whether that future is in the desert remains to be seen

BY SARAH MCLELLAN

GROWING PAINS ARE expected in Arizona, where the franchise is in the midst of a rebuild after a disappointing tumble down the standings last season. But the Coyotes' competitiveness this year has been one of the NHL's feel-good transformations.

And a chunk of their early success can be traced to the 20-somethings they invited onto their roster. "That to me is real progress for us, that young players coming in are playing meaningful roles and playing well," GM Don Maloney said.

The Coyotes have consistently had at least four rookies in the mix with forwards Max Domi, Anthony Duclair and Jordan Martinook and defenseman Klas Dahlbeck making the team out of training camp.

Domi and Duclair weren't exactly surprise additions. The 20-year-olds each wrapped up successful junior careers last year that included impressive performances at the 2015 World Junior Championship for the Canadian team that captured gold.

Although it's clear both are still adapting to life in the NHL, neither has disappointed. The duo has helped the Coyotes become a much more dangerous offensive team than the club that slumped to a 2.01 goals-per-game average in 2014-15.

Both Domi and Duclair reached double-digits in goals in December with Domi's productiveness ranking among the best for first-year players. "There's challenges and ups and downs and that's part of not just a rookie season but an NHL season in general," said Domi, drafted 12th overall in 2013. "It's not an easy league by any means, but we're all having fun."

Martinook, 23, has assumed a depth role, and the ease with which he's been able to slide into the forward group is indicative of the experience he earned in the minors: after being selected 58th in 2012, he spent parts of three seasons in the AHL.

He hasn't looked out of place this season and is arguably one of the Coyotes' best penalty killers. "I try to work as hard as I can, and I'm trying to be the best forechecker every night," Martinook said.

Dahlbeck is another up-and-comer who joined Arizona last season as part of the

but the team's revamped look has revealed progress. And, ultimately, that was the goal of injecting youth onto the roster in the first place. "We've been a better team for it," coach Dave Tippett said.

Not only have the youngsters helped the on-ice product evolve, but their arrival has re-energized an organization and fan base that were simmering in disappointment after slotting 29th overall last season. Optimism for the future is abundant, even if it isn't clear where in Arizona the Coyotes will play after 2016-17.

Last summer, the city of Glendale nixed its 15-year, \$225-million arena management agreement with the team. The Coyotes were able to find a short-term solution, signing a two-year commitment with Glendale to remain at Gila River Arena for this season and next, but the franchise has yet to settle on a permanent home.

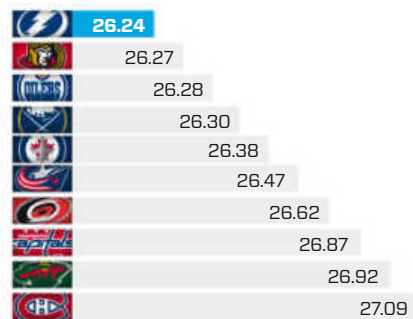
There has been speculation about a move back to Phoenix where the Coyotes originally played after relocating from Winnipeg in 1996, but nothing has been finalized as the organization continues to explore its options.

Despite this uncertainty, much of the focus this season has remained between the boards and rightfully so. The Coyotes have been entertaining to watch and relevant in the standings.

And their rookies are a significant reason why. "Our young players have been really good," Tippett said. "They want to learn. They're hungry for knowledge and when mistakes are made, it's not because they're not trying. They're all-in, which for that side of it I give them a ton of credit, because they're getting an opportunity that is sometimes rare. But that's the situation our team's in. We're going to make sure they get opportunity and make sure our organization grows...It's great to see them take advantage of that opportunity." **TIP**

YOUNG BLOOD

Despite the injection of youth, the Coyotes, average age of 27.47 doesn't put them among the NHL's 10 youngest teams, according to quant hockey.com



POWERFUL ROOKIES ON A COYOTES

Duclair was acquired in a blockbuster trade before last season's deadline that sent defenseman Keith Yandle to the Rangers – a move that triggered the Coyotes' rebuild – and it made sense to include him in the team's pursuit of improvement. "I want to stay in the lineup every night, just help the team produce on a night-to-night basis and just help the team win," Duclair said.

trade that sent center Antoine Vermette to the Blackhawks. The 24-year-old is cultivating an identity as a steady, rugged presence on the back end. "I'm a big guy, and that's something I should use to my advantage," Dahlbeck said.

It's too early to tell whether or not this version of the Coyotes will remain competitive enough to lasso a playoff berth,



Stuck with a batch of brawlers, Panarin couldn't find a groove. Four years later, he's an NHL scoring sensation in Chicago

BY **DAN MARRAZZA**



WHEN THE 2012-13

lockout ended, the effects went way beyond the NHL, NHLPA, players and fans.

They were felt as far away as Russia, where Artemi Panarin was languishing in anonymity on HC Chekhov Vityaz, the KHL's version of the Bad News Bears

Chekhov's leading scorer during a good portion of Panarin's four seasons with the team was ex-NHL enforcer Chris Simon. One of his coaches was former NHL goon Andrei Nazarov, whose KHL coaching career has been marked by a series of ugly incidents, including when he attacked an opposing team's fans with a stick and hospitalized his team's doctor following a physical altercation in the dressing room. Panarin never had more than 12 goals in any season while playing for Chekhov, based in the Russian industrial city of Podolsk. He bounced back and forth between his team's top scoring lines and its bottom six, as Chekhov finished at or near the bottom of its conference four straight years.

Soon after the lockout ended, however,

PACKING PUNCH

ARTEMI PANARIN

Panarin went from the outhouse to penthouse when he was dealt to St. Petersburg SKA after the KHL extended its trade deadline because of the exodus of players back to the NHL. St. Petersburg had lost its two biggest offensive stars in Ilya Kovalchuk and Vladimir Tarasenko after they were returned to their NHL teams and were in desperate need of adding some scoring.

JEFF VINNICK/NHL/LIA GETTY IMAGES

For Panarin, the trade was a turning point in his career. He helped St. Petersburg to the conference final before losing to eventual KHL champion Moscow Dynamo. The next season, Kovalchuk left the NHL and returned to St. Petersburg – and that's when Panarin's game really took off. Playing with Kovalchuk was the trigger that turned Panarin from a virtual unknown on both sides of the Atlantic into one of the KHL's elite scorers – and now into one of the NHL's hottest rookies. "Even in Russia, I wasn't really known when I was 18," he said. "Then I got to the right place. Ilya Kovalchuk was there. I was watching him, and I grew my game because of that."

Viktor Tikhonov was teammates with Panarin for two years in St. Petersburg and most recently with the Chicago Blackhawks, before being claimed off waivers by the Arizona Coyotes in early December. He witnessed the change in Panarin after the trade, first as an opponent and then as a teammate. "To be honest, I don't remember noticing him playing against him with Chekhov," Tikhonov said. "I remember that team having a lot of big guys, and they used to like to fight a lot. They were a team where if they don't have a fight, but the team wins, the fans go home disappointed. If the team is losing, but there's a fight, they'll be clapping...In Chekhov, they had guys practicing with punching bags, and that's what he was learning. That's not his game. He has a ton of talent."

Panarin had hardly played in a big game or with elite linemates until his trade to St. Petersburg. There he got to play a classier brand of hockey alongside the likes of Kovalchuk, Tikhonov and Roman Cervenka. And Panarin flourished, nearly doubling his previous career high in his first full season in St. Petersburg, with 20 goals and 40 points to tie Kovalchuk for the team lead in scoring. Last season, he finished with 62 points in 54 games, usurping his mentor as St. Petersburg's scoring leader and leading his team to a KHL championship. "(Kovalchuk) told me all about the NHL," Panarin said. "He told me to be myself, play my game and don't lose my confidence. He told me to play like I know how to play."

As much as Panarin proved his mettle in the KHL, success in Russia doesn't necessarily translate to the NHL. There are

countless examples of high scorers who have excelled in the KHL, only to see their production dwindle when faced with the tighter checking and smaller ice surfaces in the NHL.

In fact, when Panarin arrived in North America before this season, he was one of three marquee free agent scorers to arrive in the NHL via the KHL. And he's the only one to have made a successful

even when I don't speak English."

That chemistry between the two has carried the Blackhawks' offense through the first half of the season. With the exception of Kane and Panarin, most of Chicago's forwards were having subpar individual campaigns. At the season's midway point, Jonathan Toews was on pace to finish with fewer than 50 points for the first time (in a non-lockout season). Marian Hossa could



transition. Sergei Plotnikov, a 25-year-old winger who starred for Lokomotiv Yaroslavl last season, had zero goals and only two assists in his first 30 games with the Pittsburgh Penguins. Steve Moses, an undersized American-born winger who set a KHL record by scoring 36 goals with Jokerit (Helsinki) last season, signed with the Nashville Predators and didn't even make the team in training camp. He continued to struggle with the AHL's Milwaukee Admirals and has since returned to the KHL after scoring only twice in 17 minor league games in North America.

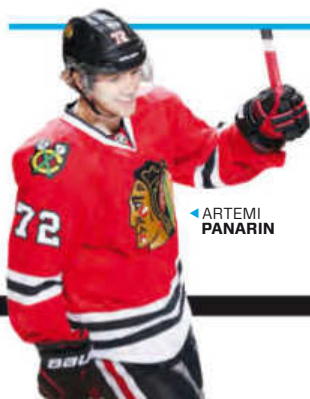
Panarin, meanwhile, has nearly been a point-per-game player in the NHL. The Blackhawks, who he chose from a long list of suitors, have eased his transition. He's been given a chance to play on a line with Patrick Kane and centered by countryman Artem Anisimov. He found instant chemistry with Kane, who at 5-foot-11 and 175 pounds is almost the same size as Panarin and plays a similar, smooth-skating, puck-possession style. "We're on the same wavelength," Panarin said. "He understands me,

ABLE AND KANE

Panarin and Kane match up well with the Blackhawks, physically and stylistically.

finish with fewer than 40. This is all occurring as neither Teuvo Teravainen nor Andrew Shaw have developed their offensive games as expected, and the Hawks never quite finding a power forward to replace Brandon Saad.

And there is cause for concern that the production from Chicago's newest dynamic duo might drop off. Coming into this season, Kane's points-per-game average for October, November and December was 1.12. For January, February, March and April, it was 0.88. While Panarin has yet to experience the full grind of an NHL season – KHL seasons are 60 games long – and will soon enter uncharted territory. But Kane isn't worried. "The way we want to play is similar," Kane said. "The more he gets experience and the more he gets confidence, his game is only going to grow. He has a bright future." **THE**



TEARIN' IT UP

Panarin's ranks high among his rookie brethren in several offensive categories.

ARTEMI PANARIN

1ST
POINTS

1ST
GOALS

1ST
ASSISTS

2ND
TOI (F)



NHL TEAM REPORTS



RETURN OF THE MAC

It was a long two months of sitting in the press box – or alone at home – for Connor McDavid. But there were pluses to his forced vacation

BY ROB TYCHKOWSKI

THERE ARE NOT A LOT OF bright sides to smashing your collarbone 13 games into your NHL career.

But Connor McDavid decided he'd salvage something positive from the wreckage of that end boards collision on Nov. 3, rather than spend the entire recovery process in a mope.

He's not going to lie and say

he had a smile on his face the whole time. In fact, he says it was brutal. But now that the worst is over, he's hoping to take advantage of some of those faint silver linings. "You're upset," McDavid said. "I think anybody would be. But there is a time where you have to put it behind you and try to look at the positive side of things, getting a

chance to rest and come back.

"Everyone will be a little bit tired during a long, gruelling year and you'll be fresh again. You have to try and look at the positives. Obviously, it's tough to do that in this situation, but you have to try to do it to the best of your abilities."

They say you can learn a lot from watching a few games in the press box, and McDavid's class was in session for a long time. He had two months to observe the NHL game from upstairs, taking what he learned in coach Todd McLellan's film sessions and watching how those systems were (or weren't) applied on the ice. "It's been a good chance to study the game a little more and get a good understanding for it," he said. "I'm still a young guy in the league trying to understand everything and I'm trying to

TUNNEL VISION

McDavid's road to recovery started quickly: he was back in the gym within a matter of days.



use the time to study the game and understand certain situations a little bit better.

"That way, it's been positive, it's been a good opportunity to do that."

McDavid was just starting to find his professional rhythm – 11 points in the eight games before his injury – when he got tangled up with a pair of Philadelphia Flyers defensemen and slammed shoulder first into the boards at Rexall Place. He needed a handful of plates and screws in his collarbone to repair the damage, then did everything he could to stay



CON AIR

McDavid was just taking flight before being grounded for two months with a broken collarbone.

were some dates that were tougher to miss than others," he said. "Not playing a game in Toronto, where you see all your buddies and you want to play in front of your family and friends, that was tough. That's the arena I grew up watching. The ACC for me, that's my idea of the NHL.

"Pittsburgh, being so close to Erie (where he played junior), I had a lot of friends coming to see that and my billet family was coming, that was hard to miss, too."

So was having to stay back in Edmonton by himself while roommates Taylor Hall and

out there so bad with them."

Coming back won't be easy, despite being well rested and having studied the game for months. McDavid's an elite level talent who's better at 80 per cent than most players are at 100, but walking into the middle of a season cold is a stern challenge for anyone.

It's like trying to hop a bus that isn't stopping for you. "Everyone around the league is probably in a bit of a groove, because we're kind of in the middle of the year," he said. "It's going to be a tough comeback. It's never fun coming back from an injury, anybody will tell you that. Coming back in the middle of the year is a bit different because everyone is going so well. But you start over and you can't worry about it." **TEN**

CONNOR
MCDAVID



THERE WERE SOME DATES THAT WERE TOUGHER TO MISS THAN OTHERS. NOT PLAYING A GAME IN TORONTO, THAT WAS TOUGH — Connor McDavid

in shape after his surgery: he ditched his sling and was back in the gym within days, began skating on his own in mid-December and resumed practising with the team Jan 1. "It feels pretty good," McDavid said. "My hands feel as good as you'd expect. It's been all positive so far. There hasn't been any pain with

it basically since surgery. It's felt pretty good for a long time."

If he remains healthy, he'll still get in more than 30 games after his return, but he missed a lot of good stuff while he was out, like a head to head game with Sidney Crosby or standing on the blueline for the anthem at the United Center. "There

Luke Gazdic were gone on road trips. "It's not the most fun to be stuck at home when everybody is gone, but I've had a couple of friends come out to visit and keep me company.

"It's been really nice, but at the same time, you miss the guys and it's not fun to watch them compete, you want to be

RETURN TICKET



ANDERS NILSSON WASN'T

just willing to bet on himself, he was willing to put up some pretty high stakes in the process.

Like a year in Tatarstan.

Believing his stagnating career needed a re-start, Nilsson gambled that leaving the NHL for Russia wasn't an admission of failure, but rather the perfect place to launch a new beginning. "I had three seasons with the Islanders organization and I felt I didn't develop my game as I wanted," said Nilsson. "I wanted to play in the second best league outside the NHL and I thought that was the KHL, so that's why I chose to go there. I'm happy I did because

I felt like I took a really big step last year, both as a goalie and a person, too."

Nilsson's big, cold, isolated risk paid off. He put up great numbers with Ak Bars Kazan (1.71 GAA and .936 save percentage) and was solid at 2015 World Championship, landing him a contract with the Oilers for this season, where he's already played 22 games as a 25-year-old rookie. "It was good, better than I expected it to be," he said of the Russian experience. "I was lucky I went to a very good team and organization. They really took care of me. I had some good coaches, had a good goalie coach.

"It's obviously a tough league,

some very good, very skilled players. Some tough road trips, too. It's a big country so you do some long travelling."

The 6-foot-5, 227-pounder knew when he left North America two years ago he might never come back, but he felt he had to take the chance. "I knew there was a good chance it could have been like that, but I had a goal to go to the KHL and one day come back to the NHL. I didn't put up a time frame, whether it was going to take one year, two years or three years. I just knew in the back of my head I had a goal of coming back." — **ROB TYCHKOWSKI**



JACK EICHEL

ALL IN THE FAMILY

Bunking with the Moulson clan has let Eichel focus on hockey. The early returns are matching the hype

JACK EICHEL SOUNDS LIKE THE happiest kid in the NHL right now.

He was one of the top rookie scorers at the midway point and had clearly found his feet in Buffalo, with particular success on a line with Zemgus Girgensoons and Sam Reinhart.

But it's not just on-ice chemistry. The Massachusetts native is finding Buffalo to be a second home pretty quickly. He's living with the family of Sabres veteran Matt Moulson and, after a year in Boston U. dorms on his own, Eichel is loving the family atmosphere. "They do so much for me, I could never repay them," Eichel said. "Having a stable home environment, not worrying about cooking meals or doing laundry... it made the adjustment so much easier."

The powerful 19-year-old center does try to pitch in with dishes and such but hasn't been tasked too much otherwise. Moulson has two young children, but so far there haven't been any calls for babysitting. "I don't know if they trust me enough with their kids," Eichel said with a laugh. "But the kids love me. It's my job to keep them occupied."

Outside of the Moulson residence, Eichel has already settled into a nice

routine. He eats at the same local restaurant for every pregame meal with David Legwand and often Josh Gorges and others (Tyler Ennis has also been part of the crew). The teammates take the time to relax and shoot the breeze. And again, it's a chance for Eichel to get more comfortable.

As another bonus, the diehard Sabres fans of Western New York have shown their devotion early and often when Eichel has found himself in other eateries. "There are so many good places to eat in Buffalo, I don't think people realize it," he said. "And people really take care of you. They love their team here."

While there are no givens in hockey, Eichel having immediate success in the NHL was a pretty good bet, considering he had just come off one of the best freshman seasons in NCAA history, winning the Hobey Baker Award and getting Boston U. to the Frozen Four title game. His NHL debut happened to fall on his dad's birthday, and Eichel rewarded the big guy with a goal against Ottawa. "Our team motto is 'The Next Chapter,'" Eichel said. "Being a part of that next chapter in Buffalo and scoring that goal felt great." — **RYAN KENNEDY**

FAB FRESHMEN



An injury to Cam Fowler opened the door for **Shea Theodore** to get his much-anticipated NHL debut. The offense-minded defender out of WHL Seattle was having a great AHL season in San Diego when the call came. Theodore was a regular on Anaheim's first-unit power play and the Ducks allowed just two goals in his first four games.



Anthony Duclair burst on the New York and WJC scene a year ago with such pizzazz that it's hard to remember he's still a rookie. The smooth, 20-year-old winger matched ballyhooed rookie teammate Max Domi goal for goal through the first half. And Duclair has been doing it with a shooting percentage among the best in the NHL.



The overlooked portion of the Milan Lucic trade was D-man **Colin Miller** coming to Boston. Miller, who was a key part of Manchester's AHL title last year, has brought excellent mobility and puck movement to the Bruins' shallow back end. He was crushed, though, to learn he'd be sent down the day before the Winter Classic.



Remember **Sam Reinhart**, drafted second overall in 2014? The Sabres returned him to junior after nine games last year, but he's shown improvement under Jack Eichel's shadow in 2015-16. Reinhart, who hit the gym hard and arrived at camp thicker, spent most games as a top-six right winger and flirted with a 20-goal pace.



Sam Bennett went through long runs of goal-less and point-less droughts, but his strong two-way, physical play has made him not only a regular, but a favorite of coach Bob Hartley. The 19-year-old center is spending most games on the left wing with sophomore Markus Granlund. His puck sense is off the charts.



FAB FRESHMEN



The Canes don't just have one good young D-man, they've got a whole crew. Along with Noah Hanifin, the roster includes **Brett Pesce**, a standout with New Hampshire who has become a top-four guy. Smart and competitive, Pesce has an active stick and excellent positioning, while adding some offensive upside.



A whopping 10 rookies played at least one game for the new-look Hawks in the first half of 2015-16. Blueliner **Trevor van Riemsdyk** suited up for every one. The younger brother of Toronto's James didn't flash offensive flare but led the team in blocked shots and logged more than 20 minutes a night, including regular penalty kill work.



Calvin Pickard was stellar last year in Colorado's net, posting a .932 SP, but he only appeared in 16 games and is still a rookie. He drew into the lineup to spell injured Reto Berra in late December but remains stuck behind Berra and Semyon Varlamov on the depth chart. Pickard is NHL ready but will continue to spend most of his year in the AHL.



Dubbed 'Wild Bill' by Ducks staffers, **William Karlsson** began his NHL career in Anaheim, but came over to Columbus at the 2015 trade deadline in the James Wisniewski deal. A gold medalist with Sweden at the 2012 WJC, Karlsson is a smart, talented center who has held down a bottom-six role, though the offense hasn't come yet.



Stars GM Jim Nill has the Midas touch this season, and that includes his **Mattias Janmark** acquisition in last year's Erik Cole trade. Janmark sniped six goals in December and had nine by the midway point, flourishing as a second-liner on Jason Spezza's left wing. Coach Lindy Ruff told reporters Janmark plays like a 10-year veteran.



NOAH'S ARC IS A LEARNING CURVE

Less than three years ago, Hanifin was overpowering boys in high school. Now he's mixing with big NHL men

CHILLS. THAT'S HOW NOAH HANIFIN describes his first NHL game. It's one of the first words that comes out of the 18-year-old's mouth when he talks about what it was like the first time he stepped on NHL ice.

With the hype surrounding Connor McDavid and Jack Eichel, it's easy to forget Hanifin was once in the conversation to be 2015's top draft pick. Come draft day, though, he was selected fifth-overall by the Carolina Hurricanes. Then he did what few defensemen his age ever do: he cracked an NHL roster while still in his teens. Hanifin admits he's still learning the ropes, though, and he even isn't afraid to say that the adjustment period took a while. "I would say probably 25 games or so I started to feel a lot more confident out there," Hanifin said. "It took a while, though. I'm still trying to get better and get even more confident. I'm not where I want to be yet. It's my first year, and I'm 18. It's more of a learning experience. I still have a long ways to go."

It's a learning process for Hanifin, as it is for many rookies, but unlike those other rookies he hasn't had the benefit of seasoning in the AHL to learn the ways of the pro game. Only

three seasons ago, Hanifin was playing high school hockey for St. Sebastian's (Mass.). Now, after one year at Boston College, he's lining up across from the likes of Sidney Crosby, Alex Ovechkin and John Tavares. "When I was in college or previous, it was pretty easy for me to use my skating ability to play defense and get the puck and rush up the ice," he said. "Now you actually have to use your body, use your strength to push guys off the puck."

Hanifin said being able to watch and skate with teammate Justin Faulk has helped him improve, and Hanifin is trying to incorporate parts of Faulk's game into his own. One thing he's learned is to be more patient with the puck and play with poise. But adjusting to the NHL also includes learning the ins and outs away from the rink. Nathan Gerbe, who Hanifin lives with, has helped Hanifin most in that regard.

"In the NHL, everything's so fast, so demanding and you need to do everything the right way or you're going to be held accountable for it," Hanifin said. "That's the biggest thing. Your job is always on the line in the NHL. You have to show up every day and work hard." — **JARED CLINTON**



ANDY ANDREOFF

ANDY'S RAGGEDY GAME FITS KINGS

Late-blooming Andreoff impresses as a rookie in L.A. with his mean streak and sneaky scoring touch

IT CAN BE INTIMIDATING ENOUGH FOR rookies to enter an NHL dressing room, but how does it work when you're trying to break in with the Kings? After all, Los Angeles has won two Stanley Cups in the past four seasons, its roster features a host of veteran stars such as Anze Kopitar, Drew Doughty and Jonathan Quick, and it's coached by the high-profile Darryl Sutter. For left winger Andy Andreoff, the answer is surprisingly low-key. "It was pretty easy," he said. "The guys brought us into the family, and we're all pretty close."

Bringing a tough edge to the fourth line, Andreoff, 24, is one of several youngsters who have augmented the Kings' lineup this year, joining Michael Mersch and Nick Shore. Hailing from Pickering, Ont., Andreoff was taken in the fifth round of the OHL draft by the Oshawa Generals, located just a couple towns over from his home. "It's a great organization," he said. "They treated me like gold. I grew up going to their games, so I was definitely excited to be there."

Andreoff started off slowly, but eventually his combination of scoring prowess and toughness caught the eye of the Kings. After being passed over entirely

in two drafts, Andreoff was tabbed by Los Angeles in the third round in 2011, his last year of eligibility. After two fight-filled years in the AHL, he graduated to the Kings for an 18-game stint, though it happened to be during last year's playoff-missing maelstrom. Needless to say, this time around has been much more pleasant. "Things are going our way this season," he said. "We've been working better as a team."

Andreoff believes the young guys are finding their comfort level thanks to the lessons imparted by the veterans. The power of players like himself and Kyle Clifford also balances out the finesse up top from Tyler Toffoli and Tanner Pearson (both of whom are only 23, keep in mind).

And while fighting may not be as prominent in the NHL these days, Andreoff is keeping the torch lit, taking on tough customers all over the place. The Kings rookie already has a running feud with Colorado tough guy Cody McLeod and has also tangled with Brandon Prust and Gregory Campbell, among others. Tough work, but when you're doing it for a rugged team like the Kings, finding a role can be key. — RYAN KENNEDY

FAB FRESHMEN



Blueliner **Alexey Marchenko** got a taste of the NHL last year and has now settled in as a full-time Red Wing, even finding himself a long-term place to live in Detroit. He projected as more of a puck-mover as a prospect but hasn't shown much offense yet. Marchenko lacks flash but has impressed coach Jeff Blashill with his fundamentals.



The Oilers didn't want to throw 20-year-old defender **Darnell Nurse** into the cauldron right away, so they gave him a six-game apprenticeship in the AHL with Bakersfield. Since then, the gritty Nurse has been a tower of power on the Edmonton blueline. Nurse ranks third on the team in both time on ice and in hits.



Power forward **Logan Shaw** is the pride of Glace Bay, a community within Cape Breton, N.S. He played most of his major junior with QMJHL Cape Breton and is a long way from home down in Florida. When Shaw notched his first NHL goal Dec. 8, he became the first Glace Bay native to score in the NHL since Doug Sulliman in 1989-90.



The wait for **Derek Forbort** was getting interminable. First round picks (15th overall in 2010) are expected to make a quicker ascension than five years, but the learning curve for the Duluth, Minn., native was going in the right direction. The Kings would like to see the 6-foot-4, 212-pounder play a meaner, heavier game.



No Wild rookie stood out in the first half, as the highly touted Mike Reilly was just called up in early January. The most notable was **Christoph Bertschy**, a speedy, slick Swiss center who got into three games. He led lowly AHL Iowa in scoring. He remains raw and doesn't have the first-round pedigree of countryman Nino Niederreiter.

ANDREOFF: CONDON; FRANCIS: LACASSE/NHL VIA GETTY IMAGES; MARCHENKO: ABELIMAGES/GETTY IMAGES; NURSE: JEFF VINICK/NHL VIA GETTY IMAGES; SHAW: ELIOT / SCHECHTER/NHL VIA GETTY IMAGES; FORBORT: CHRISTIAN PETERSEN/GETTY IMAGES; BERTSCHY: GREGG FORWERK/NHL VIA GETTY IMAGES



FAB FRESHMEN



The trial by fire continued for **Mike Condon**, an elder rookie at 25, as Carey Price's injury woes dragged into the New Year. Condon excelled at the start of the season but became exposed the more work he received. He SP was .944 in October but dipped to .906 in November and .888 in December. He went winless in nine-game December stretch.



Don't sleep on **Viktor Arvidsson**, who Nashville drafted as a 21-year-old in 2014. He was a big scorer in Sweden and transitioned well to the North American game in 2014-15. After 17 points in 14 AHL games this fall, the Preds couldn't hold him back any longer. He joined the big club, potted a few goals and received top-six shifts.



The Devils have succeeded thanks in part to an influx of new faces and while **Sergey Kalinin** hasn't put up big numbers, he is getting used to North America. The Russian free agent spent years in the KHL with hometown Avangard Omsk but is living the NHL dream in Newark. A solid two-way player, Kalinin is Calder-eligible at 24.



The Isles have only needed spot duty from their newbies, with **Adam Pelech** getting into a handful of games in the first half. A big, strong blueliner, he made his name in the OHL with the Erie Otters, where he was named scholastic player of the year in 2012. Pelech also saw world junior duty with Canada in 2014, but didn't medal.



It's been a long time coming for **Dylan McIlrath**, a controversial pick in 2010. Known as 'The Undertaker' thanks to his fighting prowess, McIlrath was taken 10th overall - before Cam Fowler and Vladimir Tarasenko. In brief NHL stints prior to this year, McIlrath fought Brian McGrattan. Now he's seeing more ice and potted his first NHL goal.



EXAMINING LINDBERG'S BABY

Swede's inaugural season has had some hot and cold patches. But he's showing he belongs in the NHL

ONE EVENING IN MID-NOVEMBER, four Rangers hailed a cab from their Tampa hotel for a dinner at Boca, a California/Mediterranean-styled restaurant transformed from a late-1920s gas station. Henrik Lundqvist led the quartet, which included Mats Zuccarello, Jesper Fast and Oscar Lindberg.

There, they met former Ranger and current Lightning defenseman Anton Stralman, part of a loose entourage of mostly Swedish players who sometimes gather away from home to exchange stories in their native language.

Lindberg, the newest of the group, had shown he belonged. The 24-year-old rookie center scored four goals in the first three games, and seven goals and 10 points in the first 13 games, helping ignite the Rangers' 14-2-2 start. But like the team, Lindberg, who was acquired from Phoenix in May 2011 for Ethan Werek, cooled down.

Derek Stepan missed 10 games with broken ribs, and Lindberg was rotated between wing and center. He scored just three times before the Christmas break. "I knew it was not going to go as easy as it was in the beginning," said Lindberg, drafted 57th by the Coyotes

in 2010, "but you've got to work hard and stay focused. You know it's going to go up and down during the season, that's happened before for me. You just try not to get too frustrated."

Indeed, Lindberg, soft-spoken but determined, has been a strong finisher: he was the Hartford Wolf Pack's best player in the second half of 2014-15 and had 16 points in 15 AHL playoff games. In 2012-13, playing for Skelleftea, he was MVP of the SHL playoffs.

The Rangers needed Lindberg to make the club this fall and he did, winning the Lars-Erik Sjöberg Award as top rookie in camp. His prowess at faceoffs and responsible two-way play often forced Kevin Hayes to the wing. The goals came mostly by going to the net and cleaning up rebounds, a trait the Rangers had been lacking. "He's been in the right places at the right times," said coach Alain Vigneault.

But after a stretch of games in which Lindberg lost his poise, committing four minors, he was a healthy scratch for a game against Winnipeg Dec. 18. "Careless penalties," Lindberg said upon return. "I need to be more careful with the stick...and get to the right places more often." — **STEVE ZIPAY**



FABULOUS FABBRI PLAYING IT COOL

Crafty rookie has all the moves and is finally making a name for himself after a run of bad luck with injuries

ROBBY FABBRI PLAYS IT AS COOL ON the ice as he does on the dance floor. Maybe that's why he's overcome so much since St. Louis drafted him 21st overall in 2014.

He looked like a steal the moment he arrived at training camp. He was only 5-foot-10 and 180 pounds, but that didn't scare the Blues, proud owners of Jaden Schwartz. Fabbri brought the same bulldog mentality and impressed the coaching staff with his passing, shot and all-around scoring ability. A pre-season shoulder injury, however, ended any hope of making the team. He returned to OHL Guelph and earned a spot on Canada's 2015 World Junior Championship squad, but an ankle injury in the quarterfinal halted his tourney.

Fabbri made the Blues this fall after another great camp and scored in his first NHL game, but, two days later, sustained a concussion that shelved him for two weeks. The litany of injuries would mentally derail some rookies, but not Fabbri. "It's not a great feeling to deal with an injury as serious as a concussion," he said, "but I was lucky enough that I was getting better every day. The process wasn't too bad. I didn't have the best luck with injuries at the

world juniors and this one, so I've been through a bit of adversity. I know how to handle it. I tried to stay as calm as I could and focused on getting better."

It worked. Fabbri, 20, has become a meaningful contributor since rejoining St. Louis' lineup. He had nine goals by the season's midway point. He's a natural center but flourished on Jori Lehtera's left wing. "It's been pretty fun," Fabbri said. "I hope he'd say the same thing. We feed off each other well, we read what each other's going to do, and we think the game the same way."

Fabbri gives off a breezy, humble vibe. He offers multiple "thank yous" for being asked to participate in the THN Rookie Issue. He lauds roommate Joel Edmundson, just two years older and also a rookie, for being a mentor. Fabbri praises St. Louis sports fans and can't resist toasted ravioli, the city's signature appetizer. He downplays the \$100 he won in a summer dance contest with teammates. He can't remember what moves he used – only that it was hip-hop music. "I was just going with the flow," he said with a laugh.

Going with the flow got him out of a dark place and into the thick of a play-off race. — **MATT LARKIN**

FAB FRESHMEN



Better late than never for **Chris Wideman**, who debuted in the NHL at 25 after winning the AHL's Eddie Shore Award as top defenseman in 2014-15. Wideman spent the entire first half of 2015-16 with Ottawa. He flashed some of his high-end offensive potential with four goals before the calendar flipped to 2016.



The Flyers have a ton of 'D' prospects, and **Shayne Gostisbehere** is the first to arrive. 'Ghost Bear' rang up 16 points in 23 games prior to an injury, but the potential in the puck-moving capabilities and offensive upside is for real. The Florida native first made a name for himself in college, when he helped Union win a national title in 2014.



When the Penguins were searching for offense, they cast a wide net. Daniel Sprong went from the second round of the draft to the NHL, but was later sent back to junior. **Sergei Plotnikov**, a KHL standout, was the more likely candidate but has yet to make an impact. The fact he's playing fourth-line minutes probably doesn't help.



Colton Parayko continues to take the NHL by storm. He's a behemoth at 6-foot-5 and 226 pounds, his shot is powerful enough to literally shatter panes of glass and he buried six goals by mid-December. The product out of Alaska-Fairbanks slowed after a torrid offensive start, but it's clear the Blues have found a hidden gem.



Joonas Donskoi was a six-year pro in Finland, but at 23, the Sharks saw potential in him after a breakout 49-point campaign in Finland's top league. A Florida draft pick in 2010, Donskoi was signed as a free agent last summer. Playing mostly a fourth-line role, the crafty right winger had six points in a mid-December eight-game stretch.



FAB FRESHMEN



Andrei Vasilevskiy still carries rookie status even though he has Stanley Cup final experience, having filled in for injured Ben Bishop. Vasilevskiy's season started late after a blood clot scare that required surgery, but he has since returned to his role as Bishop's backup. Vasilevskiy, an elite prospect, projects as a future NHL starter.



Byron Froese needed 25 games to notch his first NHL goal, which was a bit surprising since he lit the lamp 18 times in 46 games with the Marlies last season. His job with the Leafs isn't to score, though. Froese has been used as a defensive zone faceoff specialist and averaged more than two minutes of penalty kill time per contest.



Ben Hutton started training camp no higher than 11th on most back-of-the-napkin blueline depth charts in Vancouver. But the stalwart from the University of Maine has been a regular on the third pair from Game 1. Hutton isn't overly physical, but his game is all about smart, efficient play. His Corsi rating is solid.



With Braden Holtby, the Caps haven't needed much depth in net, but **Philipp Grubauer** has been a rock. The German youngster came up through the OHL, winning a Memorial Cup with Windsor in 2010. Playing on a juggernaut Caps squad, Grubauer has put up great stats in spot duty and has surpassed his career total for NHL starts.



Ondrej Pavelec's knee injury was a blessing in disguise for Winnipeg, opening the door for prospect **Connor Hellebuyck's** debut. The Jets were immediately a different team with him between the pipes. He had a sparkling 1.85 GAA and .937 SP through his first 14 games. The Jets have a tough call to make when Pavelec returns.



QUEST FOR EXCELLENCE

McCann has had a burning desire to be perfect... to the point it keeps him awake at night

EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED. THAT should be stencilled on Jared McCann's dressing room nameplate.

The rookie center wasn't expected to crack the Vancouver roster this season. He wasn't expected to be a second-line middle man in the absence of injured Brandon Sutter. He wasn't expected to draw favorable comparisons to a budding Joe Sakic from occasional linemate Radim Vrbata. He was expected to have a good camp, go back to Sault Ste. Marie of the OHL and represent Canada at the world juniors. That was never going to happen.

There has always been a chip on McCann's shoulder and an unrelenting drive to silence his critics. He wanted to prove he had an NHL game at 19 and although not quite a six-footer, the speedster has willingly played in traffic, showed a playmaking ability and a quick release. Imagine when he gains strength in the faceoff circle?

McCann, drafted 24th overall in 2014, plays every game like it's Game 7 and sometimes has to be reeled in at the bench. "I'm the youngest in the family, so I had those times when I had the crap beaten out of me by my two older brothers - getting smashed in the

forehead with hockey sticks," he said. "I have high standards for myself, and I'm a competitive guy. I'm always going to look to improve, and I know I can always be better."

None of this surprises Vrbata. In a Nov. 25 game, McCann raced down the wing and threw a blind backhand pass right on to his winger's stick and in the flick of the wrist, the tempo changed in a 3-2 Canucks victory. "He kind of plays like Sakic," said Vrbata. "Nothing fancy but everything right. When I was in Colorado, Peter Forsberg would dangle by three guys and then dangle again. Joe was always making the simple play and making it look easy, and Jared seems to be the same. I see similarities."

However, it has come at a price. The rite of passage as an NHL regular comes with prolonged scoring slumps, moving up and down the roster and increased de-briefing texts with his father. "There have been some tough nights with sleeping," McCann said. "The compete in you comes out, but I've got to learn to let things go sometimes. It's a long season. I'm over-thinking things and always trying to be perfect."

Which is perfectly acceptable.

— BEN KUZMA

BY JASON BUCKLAND

**WHILE OTHER EX-NHL
ENFORCERS TOIL IN THE
AHL, CAM JANSSEN HAS
TAKEN HIS TRADE TO THE
U.K., SOAKING UP OLD
WORLD HISTORY WHILE
STILL 'DOING HIS THING'
FOR TEAMMATES AND FANS**

In the English city of Nottingham, inside a white brick building that rests against the soft sandstone of Castle Rock, there is a pub named Ye Olde Trip To Jerusalem. It was founded in the 12th century, and while one of its newest patrons is no giant, the tavern is so old, its doorways and corridors recalling a time so far away, even he must duck his head each time he enters.

Cam Janssen, all six feet of him, likes to sit there now, in his new city, the latest stop in a long and perhaps unlikely career. Last August, with no immediate pro suitors in the U.S. or Canada, the longtime Devils and Blues bruiser signed with the Nottingham Panthers of the British Elite League.

He was uniquely suited for the destination. Janssen has always devoured tales of European history, and he can't help but grab a stool in his new favorite pub and wonder about it all, to envision living in the Middle Ages, or what it would have been like to make it under the rule of King Henry VIII.

THE SHERIFF OF

NOTTINGHAM





In between crushing bodychecks and ferocious fights, Janssen has been hamming it up for Panthers fans, who've taken a quick liking to the former NHL enforcer. He even donned this blonde wig during a game in October.

People come over and say hi to the tough American, a leader of the local pro hockey club that even Janssen can't believe is so popular in town. The crowds at the Panthers' arena howl for their team, up to 7,000 roaring fans packed on top of the rink for home games. Nottingham promotes Janssen as a star; the fans chant his name and the small-town boy from the Midwest can't help but crack a smile. "I get a kick out of it," he has to admit.

Not that Janssen isn't everything a rowdy English sports fan likes to root for. In the NHL, where he played 336 games over nine seasons, Janssen was a tough guy's tough guy, a brawler and grinder content to drop gloves at the first sign he was needed.

Sometimes, his fists were tools of survival. Janssen's most infamous NHL moment came on March 2, 2007, in New Jersey, when his runaway shoulder caught the head of Toronto's Tomas Kaberle and sent him spinning to the ice. It was a late blow, Janssen can concede now, and something he felt bad about. He had hurt Kaberle, who was laid up for three weeks after the hit.

But almost as soon as medics wheeled onto the ice to deliver a stretcher to Kaberle, each Leaf seemed to be circling his calendar. The Devils would have to visit the Air Canada Centre just 18 days later. The chance for revenge was baked right into the NHL schedule.

Janssen was only 22 then, in his second season in the league, though it was his job as enforcer to handle these kinds of dust-ups. On March 20, Toronto's crowd cried for blood during the rematch, and sure enough, nine minutes into the first period, Janssen heard his name.

He turned to see Wade Belak cutting a towering figure, 6-foot-5, 222 pounds, with no mistake in his eyes. Of course it would be Belak. Janssen always knew it would be him.

The arena began to erupt. "It was so loud," Janssen said, "I almost had a heart attack."

Janssen skated toward Belak, his fists in the air. It was time to make this right.

Janssen is in a fine mood on this Friday evening late in November, happy to dig back into it all – the Kaberle affair, his improbable rise through the youth hockey ranks in rural Missouri and the latest turn in his long career.

As other ex-NHL fighters labor in minor leagues across North America, Janssen decided last summer to seek employment



Janssen has quickly garnered a cult following in Nottingham for his blue-collar style of play and sheer love for the game. His NHL pedigree has given the team some star power to sell to their dedicated fan base, which chants Janssen's name at home games in the Panthers' 7,000-capacity arena.

elsewhere. He is just 31 but knows he is almost certainly done in the NHL. If it were up to him, he said, playing in the U.K. would be his final hockey destination.

England is a long way from Eureka, Mo., not only in distance but in culture, too. "There's not too many hillbillies (in the U.K.)," Janssen cracks, "if that's what you're asking."

He kids, but Janssen is very proud of his home, 45 minutes outside St. Louis. Eureka is the town he owes everything to. It's where he played minor hockey at a time when the only career options for kids there seemed to be in construction or the military. In high school, those gifted enough played football. Failing that, they sure didn't play hockey.

But Janssen, under the counsel of his father, Dennis, and his mother, Amy, insisted the sport was for him. He first reached the OHL, yet his scoring (never more than seven goals in either of his three seasons) was not what turned heads. Instead, Janssen had an obvious



PREVIOUS PAGE+TOP: KARL DENHAM

grit to him. He was physical, always clearly among the toughest players on the ice, and he soon caught the eye of the Devils. New Jersey picked him in the fourth round (117th overall) of the 2002 draft.

In 2005, after a season in the AHL, Janssen made his big league debut, proving almost immediately to be one of the hardest hitters in the game. He never put up many points, but he wasn't really supposed to, either. Janssen was there – for five seasons (over two stints) with the Devils, four with his hometown Blues – to be physical, to put fear into his opponents, to embolden his teammates.

He was a fighter, though he considered himself more than that. Janssen created space for teammates to skate freely, and that was a badge he wore proudly. “A guy like Cam,” said Jamie Langenbrunner, who played with Janssen in New Jersey, “takes care of all the stuff nobody wants to.”



Everybody has their favorite stories, though even Janssen knows today he is best recalled for that night back in Toronto, nine years earlier. Belak, who loomed nearly half a foot over Janssen, won the fight in defense of Kaberle, according to voters on hockeyfights.com, but Janssen got his shots, too. (Belak, in fact, dropped to the ice first.) Most importantly, Janssen had faced the music. It told his teammates he wouldn't back down from anybody. “I went in there and stood my ground,” he said. “And you never really heard anything about it since.”

A willingness to mix it up is now endearing him to new fans in the U.K. A good tilt, Janssen has found, translates just fine to British hockey.

Janssen is playing more minutes in England and scoring more than he ever did in the NHL, but in many ways his role is the same as it has always been. “I still do my thing,” he said. “I’m still crushing guys. I’m fighting. I get my respect.” He continues, chuckling now: “I’m hitting guys pretty hard.”

The checks did not take long to arrive. On Sept. 19, during one of Janssen's first regular season games with the Panthers, David Clarke, Nottingham's captain, looked on as Janssen lined up an opponent along the edge of the ice. Clarke was struck by the crunch made by plexiglass and boards. “The noise was just deafening,” he



said. “Thank goodness that player turned (to see Janssen), ’cause if he hadn't it would have been lights out.”

Janssen has clicked with the Panthers as the patriotic American his British teammates, Clarke among them, love to rib him about.

Perhaps he has fit in even better in Nottingham. Janssen has taken kindly to England, and the rich history across all of Europe has provided him an unending tapestry of churches and monuments to explore. In his off-time, Janssen and his fiancée, Kate, have already visited London and Paris, and any chance the Panthers get to play road games in Scotland makes Janssen grow fond. Edinburgh Castle, in particular, has captured his heart.

Janssen has it made, he said, with the Panthers. The team pays his rent and taxes, and even provides a car to use. While the cheques are of course smaller than they were in the NHL, after all the team comps Janssen said his net compensation compares with what he could make in the AHL. He'd like to stay with the Panthers for four, maybe five seasons. However long his body holds up, he said. There are worse ways for he and Kate to live.

He looks back toward the NHL, but Janssen doesn't do so wistfully or with regret. He's pleased with his time in the league, proud that he was able to play for so long in the role he held. “Not many guys made more out of the tools he had than Cam did,” said Peter DeBoer, who coached Janssen in New Jersey.

His career churns on, an ocean away, but in the end he will be remembered for what he did best in the NHL. For Janssen, there will be no forgetting the hits, the fights, big Wade Belak coming fast toward him. “No one,” he said, “will ever be able to take those years away from me.” **TEN**

Janssen calls his March 2007 fight with Belak a key point in his career. He was in his sophomore season when he was forced to face the music in Toronto after knocking the Leafs' Kaberle out cold with a late hit in New Jersey a few weeks earlier. The fight established him as a legit NHL enforcer who wouldn't back down from anybody.



PROSPECT REPORT



FINLAND'S GOLD GLUE GUY

Aho ran the show alongside Suomi's two draft phenoms, and the NHL isn't far off for the swift Hurricanes prospect

BY RYAN KENNEDY

THE ENDURING IMAGE OF Finland's world junior gold will be of Kasper Kapanen swinging around the Russian net for a wraparound overtime goal that nearly melted the concrete of Hartwall Arena. But the path to that tally was forged by Sebastian Aho and his two linemates, 2016 draft stars Jesse Puljujarvi and Patrik Laine.

The latter two went on to be named to the WJC all-star team, and Puljujarvi won overall MVP honors, but they couldn't have done it without Aho, a Carolina Hurricanes second-rounder who doesn't usu-

SEBASTIAN AHO



POSITION
Left wing

AGE 18
HEIGHT 5-11
WEIGHT 176 lbs

DRAFTED
Car, 35th in 2015

GOLDEN MOMENT

Aho, flanked by Puljujarvi and Laine, helped the Finns win their second WJC in three years.

ally play center but certainly faked it well enough. "He was amazing," Laine said. "He will pass those smart passes and when he gets the spot, he scores."

Aho finished second in tournament scoring behind Puljujarvi, which is pretty hot considering he was also the defensive conscience of the line. "I played pretty well with Puljujarvi and Laine," Aho said. "Of course, when you score, it makes the game easier."

According to Finnish coach Jukka Jalonen, Laine and Puljujarvi needed to have the freedom to speed down the ice and make plays with their natural gifts, so having Aho's smarts to bail them out when necessary was crucial. While his two wingmen are blessed with big frames,

Aho is a more modest 5-foot-11, 176 pounds. During his draft year, there were concerns about whether he would have the size and strength to play a top-six role in the future, but the Canes were sold based on viewings dating back to the 2013 U-18 Ivan Hlinka summer tournament. "He's always been able to play over the size limitation because of his speed and quickness," said Tony MacDonald, Carolina's director of amateur scouting. "He's a great athlete and a committed athlete."

Domestically, the soft-spoken Aho plays for Karpas Oulu in the Liiga, Finland's top circuit. It may not sound like a goal to play for a team whose name means "weasels," (OK, "ermine") but that's because you're not local. "First of all, Oulu is my hometown, and Karpas is a big thing," Aho said. "It was my dream to play for Karpas my whole childhood. When I got to play for them, it was huge."

And Aho has been huge for them. He scored the Game 7 overtime winner in last year's Liiga championship final and has been keeping the good vibes going this season. He was third in team scoring after returning from the WJC but led the squad in points per game.

Aho has one more year on his contract with Karpas after this season but does have an NHL out clause. MacDonald believes the Liiga's style and structure of play is similar to that of the NHL, which will help Aho adjust when he eventually comes over. Based on his development track, Aho will get a chance to crack the Carolina roster next season.

With the Hurricanes in a rebuild, a smart, responsible kid who can play any forward position and provide offense sounds like a pretty good fit, especially if they need some clutch scoring. **TIN**

14

Points for Aho in seven games at the 2016 World Junior Championship. He was second in scoring behind linemate Puljujarvi, who had 17 points. As a trio, Aho, Puljujarvi and Laine combined for 17 goals and 44 points.



THE WINTER SOLDIER

Werenski captained the red, white and blue with pride at the world juniors. His next mission: returning the Wolverines to glory

BY RYAN KENNEDY

LOOK UNDER THE EQUIPMENT of the average hockey team and you might find a T-shirt customized with a special motivational slogan. For the world junior bronze medalists from the United States, the motto was printed on the sides of a triangle surrounded by a circle: Obligation, Courage, Justice. The captain of that squad was Columbus Blue Jackets first-rounder Zach Werenski,

and the words meant a lot to him. "Those three words are what USA Hockey is built on," he said. "You have an obligation to your family, friends and country when you wear that jersey. You go out and play with courage. And with justice, you want to go out and do the right thing at all times. Those are the three legs to the stool, as we call them. Without one of them, it's not going to stand up."

SCHOOL'S OUT

Werenski spent summer '14 earning extra high school credit but could focus on hockey in '15.

Werenski certainly stood up for his country in Helsinki. Not only was he the captain, but the all-around blueliner was also named the tournament's top defenseman, thanks in part to his nine points in seven games (tied for first among D-men with Finland's Olli Juolevi). "He's a steady influence," said U.S. coach Ron Wilson. "He moves the puck very well, he shoots the puck incredibly hard, and he's a solid performer back there."

Wilson backed up his compliments by giving Werenski ample ice time. He and partner Brandon Carlo, a Boston Bruins second-rounder, logged a ton of it (perhaps too much in the semifinal loss to Russia). Nevertheless, Werenski had the sort of tournament you could expect from one of the NCAA's top defensemen.

Now in his second year with the University of Michigan, Werenski has been the top-scoring blueliner in the Big Ten conference, despite missing games for the world juniors. He was also lightning for the Wolverines as a freshman, though this season has been a bit more chill. Werenski entered university at 17 and had to cram to finish high school in time for his freshman year in Ann Arbor, completing classes just days before the semester began. So this off-season was a little different. "I didn't even think about school over the summer," he said. "I was pretty focused on hockey. It was a ton of fun. There were so many great experiences, and I'm so grateful for all of them. But yeah, school-wise I checked out. Once the semester ended, I was gone."

Now he's back, and the mission is clear: get Michigan back into the national championship tournament after an uncharacteristic dry spell of three years. The Wolverines had a great first half, and if Captain America can keep his WJC momentum going, that shouldn't be a problem. **THE**

HOT LIST



HELSINKI HEROES

1. JESSE PULJUJARVI

FINLAND, RW

Tourney MVP and leading scorer is a top 2016 pick

2. PATRIK LAINE

FINLAND, RW

All-star sniper boosted his 2016 draft stock

3. AUSTON MATTHEWS

UNITED STATES, C

Still the king for 2016, the center led the U.S. attack

4. SEBASTIAN AHO

FINLAND, LW

Carolina pick was the glue for Laine and Puljujarvi

5. ALEXANDER NYLANDER

SWEDEN, LW

William's younger bro racked up points

6. IVAN PROVOROV

RUSSIA, D

Philly prospect was a rock on defense for silver squad

7. OLLI JUOLEVI

FINLAND, D

All-star D-man a hot commodity for 2016 draft

8. MITCH MARNER

CANADA, RW

Toronto pick played with skill and heart

9. LINUS SODERSTROM

SWEDEN, G

Islanders selection stole games for Tre Kronor

10. ZACH WERENSKI

UNITED STATES, D

Columbus pick was top D-man at the tourney



ZACH WERENSKI

POS Defense AGE 18 HT 6-2 WT 209 lbs
DRAFTED Columbus, 8th overall in 2015



TOSSING OFF FRUSTRATION


WHL Vancouver's Tyler Benson came into the league as a No. 1 pick, but has battled adversity in his NHL draft season

BY DANIEL NUGENT-BOWMAN

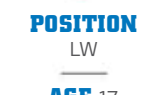
TYLER BENSON ISN'T QUITE THE same dominant offensive force heading towards the NHL draft as he was prior to his WHL days.

That metamorphosis suits him just fine, however. "(Scouts) know I know how to play offense," he said. "They know I can put up numbers. But they also want to see I'm responsible all over the ice."

Benson is projected to be a first-round pick in the 2016 draft. His latest ranking by International Scouting Services is 19th. The Vancouver Giants selected the left



TYLER BENSON



POSITION
LW

AGE 17

HEIGHT 6-0

WEIGHT 196 lbs

RANKED
19th for 2016 by ISS

winger first overall in the 2013 WHL bantam draft after he broke Ty Rattie's Alberta bantam AAA record with 146 points in 33 games.

There was talk about Benson even applying for exceptional status to enter the league early. He didn't. And he had to adjust when he eventually made the jump. "It's a lot harder to do those offensive things I was able to do in bantam," said Benson, who had 45 points in 62 games last season. "I play a little smarter game."

The Giants are counting on even more from Benson this season. They named him captain, hoping he could breathe fresh air into an organization that has made the playoffs just once in three years.

But there was a problem: Benson had to undergo surgery to remove a cyst – which started as an ingrown hair – near his tailbone. He missed the first 10 games and during that time he felt like a caged animal. He

GIANT PAIN

Surgery, then a busted lip, kept Benson from making his debut for 10 games, plus 10 minutes.

wasn't been able to train while recovering from his surgery for fear of infection, and the layoff showed when he got back on the ice. "You could tell his timing and conditioning wasn't where it needed to be," said Giants coach Lorne Molleken. "The one thing that was consistent with him was his effort."

And in a case of only-luck-being-bad-luck, Benson's return was further delayed by 10 minutes in his first game back after a puck went off the crossbar in warmups and split his lip. He needed eight stitches to close the gash before he could play.

But as the holiday break approached, Molleken believed Benson was finally getting close to returning to top form.

The youngster was skating on a line with veterans Alec Baer and Chase Lang and the team's analytics reports showed they were out-chancing opponents overall. Benson had eight goals and 25 points in 28 games before January and was named captain of Team Cherry for the CHL/NHL Top Prospects Game, where he'll once again get to show off while playing with top talent.


Benson co-led Team Canada's scoring race at the summer under-18 tournament with top 2017 NHL draft prospect Nolan Patrick of the WHL Brandon as his linemate. "He plays with the elite guys when he goes to those events," Molleken said. "That speaks volumes."


Molleken, a former NHL coach, sees Benson as a top-six forward in the pros because he can chip in offensively – and do a bit of everything else, too. "Sometimes with young players, they might be lacking in one part of their game," Molleken said. "Tyler doesn't lack anything." **THN**


4.4

Benson's points-per-game average in his final year of bantam (146 points, 33 games). After putting up a 2.0 PPG average during his midget year (170 points, 85 games), Benson is scoring at a 0.73 clip through his first 97 WHL games.

PROSPECT NEED TO KNOW

 **WILL BORGEN** was a surprise addition to Team USA at the world juniors and credits his 'Spuds' upbringing.

 **TRAVIS KONECNY** has been an instant hit in Sarnia since getting dealt at the deadline from OHL Ottawa.

 **TIMO MEIER** made his name in Halifax, but now his mission is to get Rouyn-Noranda a QMJHL championship.

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UNSTOPPABLE SODERSTROM

Sweden's all-star goaltender made a surprising announcement before the world juniors

THOUGH SWEDEN FINISHED FOURTH AT the world juniors, the Tre Kronor got incredible goaltending from starter Linus Soderstrom. The New York Islanders prospect surrendered just seven goals in five appearances, including a 46-save shutout against the U.S. in a 1-0 game the Americans swear they should have won, had it not been for the kid in the other net. So perhaps that kid's public announcement right before the tournament came at the best time possible.

Soderstrom, as it turns out, has Asperger Syndrome, a high-functioning disorder associated with the autism spectrum. "When I was younger, the things I really liked, I could focus a lot on, like hockey," Soderstrom said. "The things I didn't like, for example, school, were just a complete mess."

When he was 10 years old, Soderstrom was moved to a special school where instead of one teacher for 30 kids there were two or three for seven pupils. That change made a world of difference.

"I still keep in contact with those teachers," he said. "They meant so much to me, and I would never be standing here if it wasn't for them. A lot of teachers actually played hockey at an elite level, so it helped me in a very good way. I'm very thankful for those guys."

SODERSTROM HAS A SUPERHUMAN FOCUS, WHICH CAN BE TRACED BACK TO HIS ASPERGER'S SYNDROME

Clearly Soderstrom's hockey career has not been slowed down by the disorder. He has been great for Vita Hasten in Sweden's second-best circuit, the Allsvenskan (he's on loan from Djurgarden of the Swedish League), and this was his second year as starter for the world junior team. This time, Soderstrom was named to the tourney all-star team.

GETTING RID OF GREY AREAS

Coaches handle Soderstrom's Asperger's by keeping questions to black-and-white, yes-no answers.

He plays his angles well and being 6-foot-4 doesn't hurt. But he also has super-human focus, which can be traced back to his Asperger Syndrome. The Swedish hockey program has known about it since Soderstrom began playing at the under-16 level, so they made it their business to be there for him.

All the coaches have taken classes on how to work with such players and it basically boils down to setting up a structured environment and keeping communication very black-and-white, yes-and-no. "We're very proud of the way he has been handling situations," said Team Sweden coach Rikard Gronborg. "It's been a fun challenge for all of us and a fun ride to work with him. I know I'm a better person and better coach for it, for sure."

An outsider would never know Soderstrom was on the autism spectrum, though the mental (as well as physical) toll of losing to Finland in the semifinal hit him pretty hard. Flyers prospect Felix Sandstrom ended up playing the bronze medal game, a blowout loss to the Americans, in what proved to be a wise move by Gronborg. Otherwise, Soderstrom conducts interviews in Swedish and English with ease and stays out in the press zone as long as needed. "I'm just a regular guy on a regular team," he said.

Well, he may think he's regular, but his courage betrays the teenager as being something more than that.

Soderstrom had a unique platform when he made his pre-tournament announcement, and he made sure it wasn't just about him. "It was all about sending a message, especially to those kids who

have Asperger's," he said. "I know how it is to be in those dark days when you don't feel confident. It can be very small and very scary. I want to be a support for them. Tell them to keep on going, keep having fun with life. Keep getting great support from your family and just never stop believing. Enjoy life. That has worked out for me." **TMN**

SOFT, BUT HEAVY WORDS

Manson still talks in hushed tones due to throat injury, but the rugged rearguard's message about the future of fighting is telling

BY ALEXANDRA REILLY AND CARTER BROOKS

ONE OF THE NHL'S MOST PROMINENT PUGILISTS OF ALL-TIME says take a good look at fighting now, because you won't see it much longer.

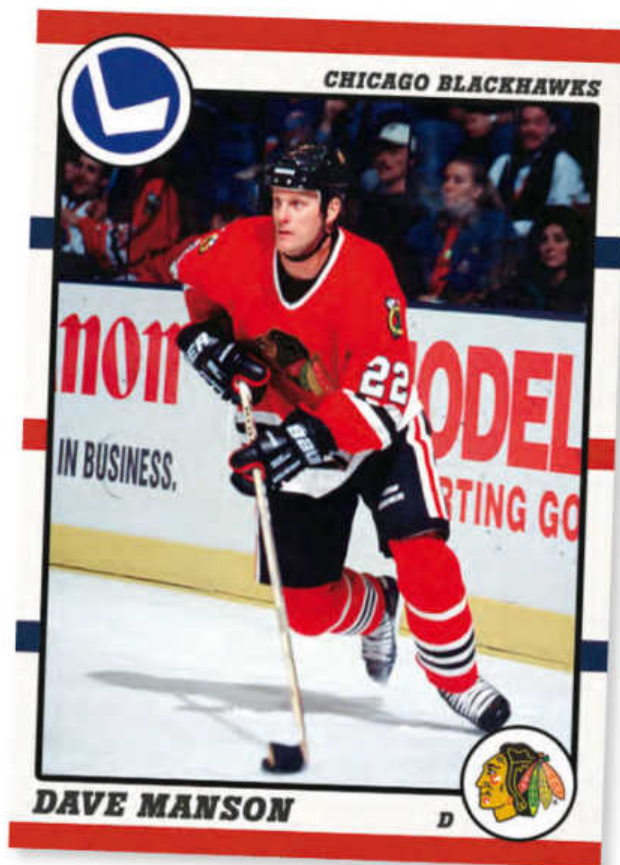
Dave Manson, a former NHL defenseman and now an assistant coach with the WHL's Prince Albert Raiders, says the game of hockey has evolved to the point where fisticuff action is getting phased out. "Long gone are the days when an enforcer would be there to fight then sit on the bench, only playing two minutes a night," Manson said. "You have to be able to keep up and make plays. You have to be able to play as an enforcer. You need four lines that can play hockey."

Manson was a frequent fighter – he ranks 13th in all-time penalty minutes with 2,792 – but he also had a booming shot and was rock solid in his own end for 1,103 games over 16 seasons. Not only is Manson seeing face-punchers being replaced by speedsters and specialists on the fourth line, he's noticing a changing attitude in the acceptance of fighting. Concussions have become an important word in the hockey vernacular. "The people that set the rules are trying to get concussions out of the game," Manson said. "If they want it out, eventually it's going to be out."

Manson was a rare, dying breed in that he was valuable from a variety of perspectives – great shot, smooth on the power play, tough in the corners and a brute as a fighter for six NHL teams, most notably Chicago. While most fans recall the latter, it's worth mentioning he had 54 points during his third year in the league and six other seasons in which he had 28 or more points. A lot of very good defensemen won't reach the 102 goals he scored.

Another of Manson's calling cards was his raspy voice. During a 1992 fight with Sergio Momesso, Manson was punched directly in the throat, permanently damaging his vocal cords to the point he could only speak softly. At the time, Manson said he'd get that issue cleared up surgically upon retirement, but numerous procedures since haven't been able to correct the problem.

Now 13 years removed from his last NHL game, Manson still talks in whispers. "I look weekly to try and find a new technology or surgery that can repair it," he said.



BRAWN AND BRILLIANT

Manson did more than just drop the gloves. He had a booming shot and was crafty with the puck.

Manson doesn't let his vocal imperfections hold him back from doing the things he loves. Upon his retirement in 2002, a coaching vacancy opened up with his alma mater in Prince Albert. He's been an assistant with the Raiders since, minus the few seasons he took off to coach his own children.

Manson's style of coaching is one that doesn't involve yelling, not only because he is physically unable to, but because that's his preference. "If I have something to say to a player, I'd rather just go up and talk

nicely about it," Manson said. "Everybody communicates differently. I just know that I didn't like it when I was yelled at as a player."

Also keeping the Manson name alive in hockey is Dave's son

Josh, a 2011 sixth-round draft pick of the Anaheim Ducks. Josh chose the NCAA route and attended Northeastern University for three years. The defenseman is in his second NHL season.

Away from the game, Manson, 49, is a family man, but also likes to golf, hunt and fish, and he cherishes his peaceful time on the outskirts of Prince Albert. "I'm keeping busy doing things that dads like to do," he said. "I'm a terrible fisherman, but I enjoy it because it's a private activity." **THEN**

“LONG GONE ARE THE DAYS WHEN AN ENFORCER WOULD BE THERE TO FIGHT, THEN SIT ON THE BENCH” – Dave Manson

Separated AT BIRTH



**JACK
EICHEL**

Formed a duo with excellent Erie Otters center Connor McDavid. Hype for their draft year was historic. Their playing careers will forever be compared. Played his junior hockey at school. Played the Devils Oct. 24 and Dec. 15. Both games were bogus for Buffalo, resulting in defeat.



**ALEX
WINTER**

Formed a duo with De La Salle College goalie Keanu Reeves in *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure*, in which they travelled back in time to meet historical figures for a school project. Their acting careers were forever compared. Met the Devil in *Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey*.

Submitted by:
Rob Stephenson

Email your suggestions to
sab@thehockeynews.com

CROSSWORD

By Larry Humber



ANSWERS AVAILABLE IN THE NEXT ISSUE AND AT THN.com/XWORD

LAST ISSUE'S CROSSWORD SOLUTION **ACROSS** 1 FOLIGNO, 4 TOEWS, 7 RATS, 8 BEAUTIES, 10 SIDELINING, 12 HOWIE, 13 MYERS, 14 NATIONWIDE, 18 DAVE KEON, 19 SEMI, 20 GREAT, 21 ST. LOUIS
DOWN 1 FARMS, 2 LETS DOWN, 3 ONE-ON, 4 TOURNAMENT, 5 ERIE, 6 SYSTEMS, 9 BLUE JACKET, 11 BELIVEAU, 12 HANGDOG, 15 IDOLS, 16 ELIAS, 17 OVIE

ACROSS

- 1 Takes by surprise, ___ napping
- 4 Angela ___ is a Hockey Hall of Famer
- 7 Bobby ___, pictured, is with Ottawa
- 8 Strapping, like the great Tim Horton
- 10 'The Miracle on ___' saw the Kings rally from a 5-0 deficit to defeat the Oilers
- 12 Number of stars selected after a game
- 13 Pat Burns was NHL ___ of the year a record three times
- 14 Calgary's football team shared nickname with this senior hockey team for decades
- 18 He went first overall in the 2002 draft
- 19 Tommy ___ was in goal when Sweden edged Canada at the 1994 Olympics
- 20 A fast skater is a ___ merchant
- 21 Washington's ___ Backstrom

DOWN

- 1 Rebound
- 2 They look after players' minor hurts
- 3 Punches
- 4 He was drafted second overall in 2015
- 5 Hall of Famer ___ Schmidt
- 6 Delete from the lineup
- 9 Came close to scoring
- 11 Sport preferred by Wayne Gretzky's son Trevor
- 12 John ___ was taken first in 2009
- 15 Steve ___ is in net in Philly
- 16 ___ on goal is a significant hockey stat
- 17 An ___ or pain is likely after blocking a shot

Behind THE MASK

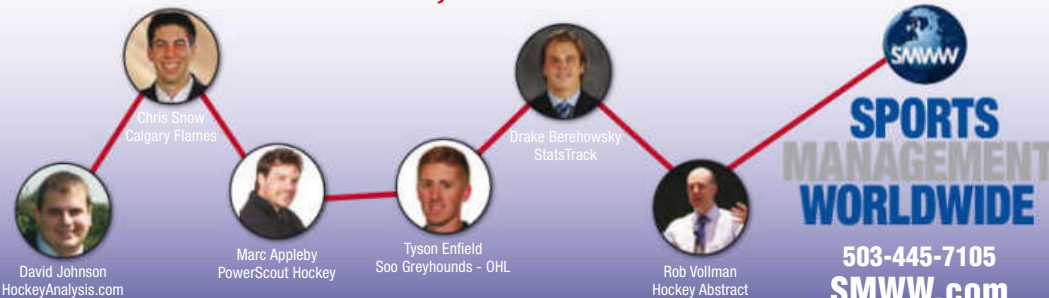
CORY SCHNEIDER | NEW JERSEY DEVILS

Schneider, a man of the people, held a mask design contest in the summer. He selected the winning art from Shawn Berhman, whose scheme takes the Devils theme literally, featuring horned demons brandishing goalie sticks. Famed mask artist Dave Gunnarsson brought the drawing to life on the actual hardware. — **MATT LARKIN**



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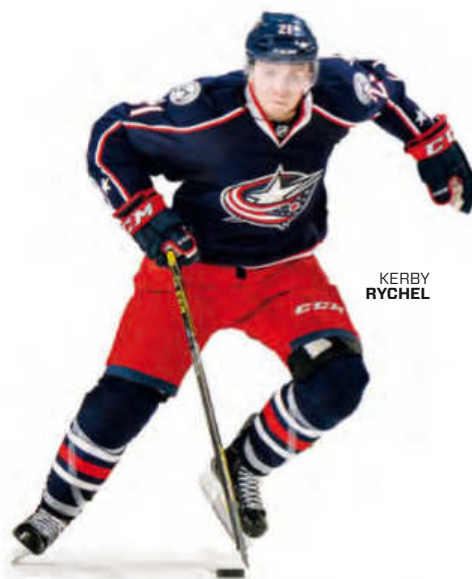


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OVERTIME WITH KEN CAMPBELL

MORE THAN ONE ROAD TO GLORY

Not every instant rookie sensation goes on to long-term success, and some slow starters will eventually bloom



KERBY RYCHEL

OF THE TOP 10 ROOKIE SCORERS through early 2016, four started the season as teenagers. That number would be one more if not for Connor McDavid fracturing his clavicle after only 13 games and being out of the lineup until after the all-star break. The inclination, of course, is to look at what guys like Max Domi and Jack Eichel are doing and assume they're going to continue their charmed careers with stardom – or perhaps superstardom – waiting around the corner. And we should, because they've given no reason for people to think otherwise.

But what about a guy like Kerby Rychel of the Columbus Blue Jackets? He's nowhere to be found among the top 10. If you're looking for Rychel these days, the place you're most likely to find him is somewhere on the I-71 between Cleveland and Columbus. This season alone, the 21-year-old has been sent down and called up 10 times for the Jackets. There was a day in October when he was called up and made the two-hour drive to Columbus for the morning skate only to be sent right back to Cleveland that afternoon. When he woke up the next morning, he learned he'd been called up again and was on a flight to Chicago to join the Blue Jackets for their game that night.

The kid can't even buy any green bananas because he doesn't know how long he's going to be in one place. The worst part of it, he says, is when he gets called up while he's on the road with the Lake Erie Monsters, because then the amount of clothing he has with him becomes an issue. That and the fact the difference between playing in the AHL and the NHL represents \$855,000 in salary. As of mid-January, Rychel had played 19 NHL games and had yet to score a goal, though he had eight assists. But the same player who played his first game in the OHL days before his 16th birthday and

was a first-round pick of Columbus is still finding his way. Like so many other teams, the Blue Jackets have placed their farm team close to them so they could do just what they're doing with Rychel. When you have a salary cap and every penny counts, shuttling players between the minors and the NHL can save valuable cap space.

For all we know, Rychel could still be a rookie next season, depending on how things play out. He played five games with them last season and, if he doesn't appear in 25 this season, he'll be a rookie again in 2016-17. His deployment has led to some tension, to be sure. It was

“
BOUNTIFUL SUCCESS AS A ROOKIE OR LACK OF IT TO START A CAREER IS NOT ALWAYS A PORTENT OF THINGS TO COME

reported he asked for a trade before the season, a la Jonathan Drouin, because his development was being stunted. Which might seem odd, since Kerby's father Warren, the GM and part owner of the Windsor Spitfires, spent five years bouncing between the minors and the NHL before becoming a full-time player.

So what does it all mean? What can we draw from Rychel and say, Artemi Panarin, a player three years older who wasn't even drafted and is now a candidate for the Calder Trophy after spending the better part of six seasons in the KHL? What it means is rookies come in

all shapes and sizes, as do their roads to the NHL. The temptation might be to assume Panarin will have the better career than Rychel based on the body of work so far, but that would dismiss what the Blue Jackets saw in Rychel when they drafted him. Is Rychel a shoo-in for full-time NHL employment? No, but everything about him suggests once he gets there and is fully prepared, he'll be a very productive player.

Bountiful success in one's rookie season or lack of it to start a career is not necessarily a portent of things to come. Of the 70 players who won the Calder Trophy between its inception in 1936-37 to 2003-04, only 29 are in the Hall of Fame or will likely be inducted when they become eligible. Gordie Howe didn't win the Calder. Neither did Jean Beliveau, Jacques Plante, Guy Lafleur, Bobby or Brett Hull or Jaromir Jagr. In fact, of the top 10 scorers of all-time, Mario Lemieux is the only one who was named to the top of his rookie class. (Wayne Gretzky and Mark Messier were ruled ineligible in 1979-80 because they had already played a season in the World Hockey Association. Otherwise, Gretzky would have won over Ray Bourque.)

Conversely, you have to be a family member or a hockey history nerd to have heard of Jack Gelineau, Pentti Lund or Brit Selby. They were guys who, like Andrew Raycroft after them, were in situations where they could have outstanding rookie seasons, only to be followed by middling careers.

It may be difficult to accept sometimes, but players such as Kerby Rychel have to remember it when they're on the bus between Cleveland and Grand Rapids or making that two-hour drive back to Cleveland from Columbus. Just because a young player takes a more scenic route doesn't necessarily mean he won't arrive at the same destination. **THE**

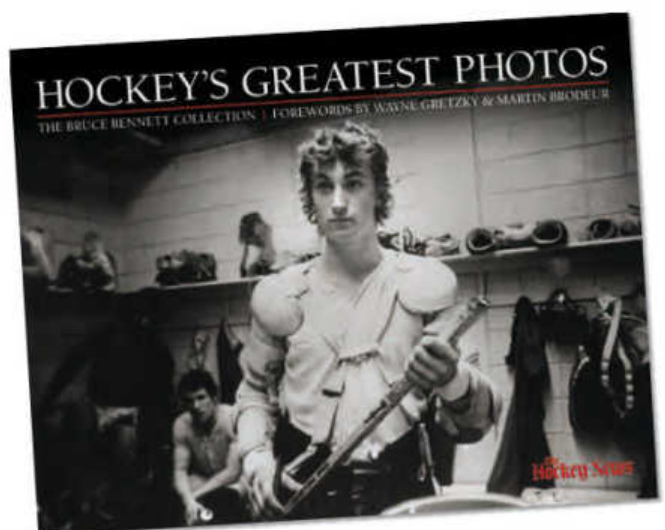
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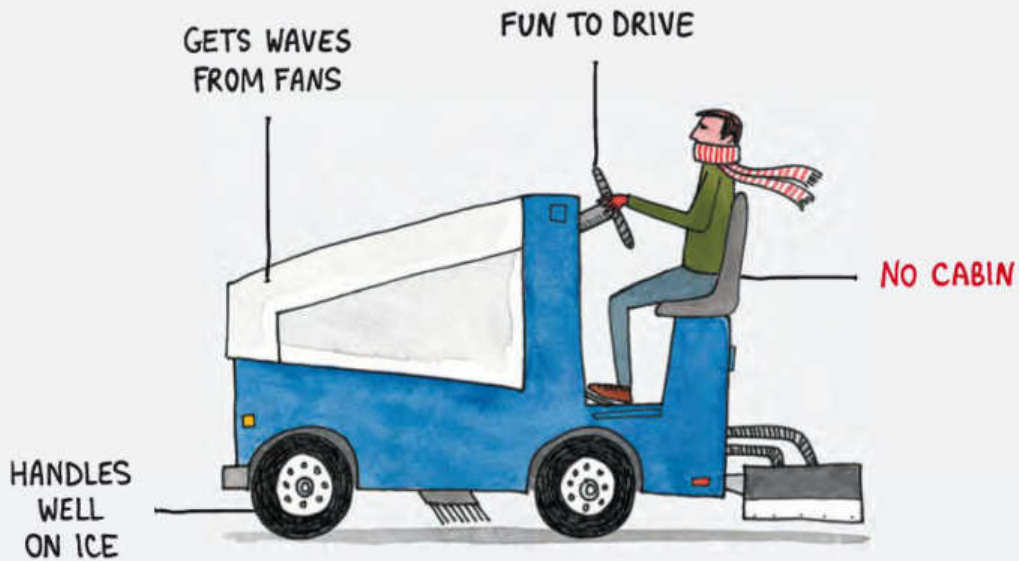
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